

# The Daily Star

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## 'BOOK OF FALSEHOODS'

White House cries foul as US president's niece in her book describes him as a lying narcissist  
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**BANGLADESH UPDATE**

**3,489**  
New cases in 24hrs

**1,72,134**  
Total cases

**2,197**  
Deaths

**80,838**  
Recoveries

**GLOBAL UPDATE**

**548,497**  
Deaths

**12,038,222**  
Total cases

## Borrowing from banks doubles

109pc rise in FY20 mainly due to sluggish revenue collection; experts say huge govt borrowing to shrink pvt sector credit

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

The government borrowed a staggering amount from banks last fiscal year mainly due to the ongoing economic crisis brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, a development that is poised for a macroeconomic imbalance in the country.

The government's borrowing increased 109 percent year-on-year to Tk 72,246 crore in FY 2019-20, which is all-time high given a single year.

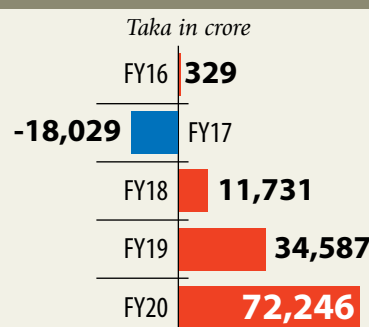
Revenue collection had faced sluggishness since the inception of last fiscal year, which also compelled the government to borrow heavily from banks.

The situation got much worse since April after the government enforced a nationwide shutdown to tackle the spread of the coronavirus.

Against the backdrop, the government borrowed Tk 29,020 crore from banks and non-banks in the last quarter of FY20 to meet its expenditure, according to data from the central bank.

The massive government borrowing from banks has already dealt a big blow to the private sector as lenders consistently

### GOVT'S BANK BORROWING IN LAST 5 YEARS



showed a reluctant attitude towards disbursing loans to the arena, experts said.

The private sector credit growth stood at 8.86 percent in May, down from 12.16 percent a year ago, show BB data.

The government had initially set a borrowing target of 47,364 crore in its budget for fiscal 2019-20, but the poor

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A lush vegetation appears to be reclaiming the stabling area at Kamalapur rail station in the capital. With a fraction of the fleet of trains operating after over two months of shutdown, the pre-pandemic hustle and bustle has yet to return to the terminal. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



## JS seat will be vacant if he is a Kuwait citizen

PM on MP Shahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

If Laxmipur-2 MP Mohammad Shahid Islam Papul is found to be a Kuwaiti citizen, his seat will be declared vacant, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said in the parliament.

"We are talking with the Kuwait government whether he [Papul] is a citizen of Kuwait or not...we'll look into it. If he's a citizen of Kuwait, then we will have to vacant his seat because law will take its own course," Hasina said.

She said this while taking part in an unscheduled debate initiated by BNP lawmaker Hanunur Rashid. He raised question of citizenship of Papul, who was

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## REGENT: A HOSPITAL GONE ROGUE

# They allowed it, now out to disown it

WASIM BIN HABIB, TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

The health services division of the health ministry knew that Regent Hospital's licence had expired years ago but it still went ahead and signed a deal in early March for treating Covid-19 patients there.

The division in its Tuesday's circular to close the hospital's Uttara and Mirpur branches for issuing fake test reports said that the hospital did not renew its licence despite several reminders.

Sources said the health minister and government high-ups was present during the ceremony for signing the memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Regent Hospital to turn it into a dedicated Covid-19 hospital.

But now the ministry is asking the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) to explain as to why the contract was signed when the hospital's licence had expired in 2014.

Abdul Mannan, secretary of health service division, told The Daily Star last night, "We have sent a letter to the DGHS asking for their explanation about signing the deal with the hospital when the

licence had expired ... and who signed the contract? Let's see what explanation they give us. We will decide after that."

Prof Abul Kalam Azad, director general of the DGHS, declined to comment.

"I have stopped talking to journalists directly. We have assigned two of our officials to talk to journalists," he told this newspaper yesterday evening.

Aminul Hasan, director of hospitals and clinics at the DGHS, said, "We did it after the high ups from the ministry asked me to allow Regent Hospital. We just executed the order."

He claimed that they had no option but to sign the contract with the hospital as initially they struggled to arrange treatment facilities for Covid-19 patients.

"Only Sazeda Foundation and Regent Hospital authorities came forward at that time," he said.

He said they had signed the agreement on the condition that "Regent Hospital will renew its licence as soon as possible".

Asked about actions they had taken, he said, "We issued two letters asking them to renew their licence. The first letter was sent on April 1 and the second one in May. We

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## FAKE COVID CERTIFICATES

# Public health, country's image abroad at stake

WASIM BIN HABIB and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The fake Covid-19 tests have not only posed a risk to public health but also put the Bangladeshi expatriates in trouble.

The risks of transmission multiplies when the tests are faked because an infected person may mingle with their family members and others in the country and beyond, experts say.

Many expatriates might face problems returning abroad if other countries have a poor impression of Bangladesh's testing and overall handling of the pandemic.

Japan, Italy and South Korea have already restricted the entry of Bangladeshis after some of them, with documents certifying that they didn't have the coronavirus, tested positive after they arrived in those countries.

The fraudulence came to fore more prominently after a mobile court on July 7 sealed off Regent Hospital on charges of issuing fake Covid-19 test reports and taking money illegally from Covid-19 patients.

Executive Magistrate Sarwoer Alam, who led the mobile court, told The Daily Star that the hospital authorities issued more than 10,000 Covid-19 test results.

Around 4,200 samples were tested at different government labs, but they threw away the rest of the samples, forged the reports and handed those to people.

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## Infection rate still hovers around 20pc

It was 21-23pc last month; 46 die, 3,489 infected in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While the entire month of June saw the infection rate hover between 21 and 23 percent, July sees no improvement.

The current infection rate is 22.26 percent, said Dr Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), during the daily coronavirus briefing yesterday.

Alongside amped-up testing from mid-May, the month of June had seen the infection rate jump. A whole week into July, the only difference lies in decimal points.

A total of 15,672 samples were tested across the country in 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday, Dr Nasima said. Of them, 3,489 tested positive for Covid-19.

The total number of infections in the country is 172,134 and the overall infection rate so far stands at 19.36 percent, she said.

In addition, 46 people died from coronavirus infection in those 24 hours, Dr

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## N95 MASK PROBE ACC quizzes officials of two firms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission is now cross-checking procurement-related documents and statements made by JMI Hospital Requisite Manufacturing Ltd Chairman Abdur Razzak before it over allegations of supplying poor quality masks, PPEs, and other medical equipment to the government.

Yesterday, ACC Director Mir Md Zainul Abedin Shebly separately quizzed Razzak and Motiur Rahman, coordinator (medical team) of Toma Construction Ltd, for about six hours to glean information from them.

On July 1, the ACC director had summoned Razzak, Motiur and chairman of Elan Corporation Aminul Islam Amin to appear before it for interrogation over the allegations.

Aminul, already accused in a case filed by the

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Rickshaws going against traffic in front of the Bangabhaban during the busy morning hour yesterday. One would think that the most basic traffic rule is enforced at least around the presidential palace.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## NORTH MACEDONIA

# 144 Bangladeshi migrants rescued from truck

AP, Skopje

Authorities in North Macedonia found 211 migrants, including 144 Bangladeshis, packed into a truck near the country's southern border with Greece during a routine check on a regional road, police said Tuesday.

A border patrol stopped the truck about midnight on Monday near the town of Gevgelija, and found the migrants including the Bangladeshis and 67 Pakistanis. Among the rescued migrants, there were also 63 children.

The truck driver, a 27-year-old Macedonian national identified by police only by his initials EP, was arrested.

The migrants were detained and transferred to a shelter transit centre in Gevgelija pending deportation back to Greece.

The Greek border with North Macedonia was closed earlier this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, but trafficking networks remain active in the area, ferrying migrants who make their way from Turkey into Greece and then head north toward more prosperous countries in the European Union's centre and north.

On June 22, 64 Bangladeshi migrants have been found in a truck on a highway near North Macedonia's border with Greece.

The driver evaded arrest during the inspection late Monday near Strumica in the country's southeast. In a statement Tuesday, police gave no other details about the migrants.

The migrants were detained and transferred to a holding site in border town of Gevgelija, pending deportation to Greece.

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