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2,520 New cases in 24hrs	2,21,178 Total cases	2,874 Deaths	1,22,090 Recoveries	644,808 Deaths	16,052,579 Total cases
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DHAKA SLUMS

Where Covid is curiously quiet

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and ZYMA ISLAM

Something strange is happening in the capital's slums -- Covid-19 cases are hard to come by.

When the pandemic first hit, the 20-odd slums in the city were feared to become virus hubs. Apart from high density of the population, shared kitchens, toilets, communal water sources, one room per family living arrangements, open sewers, non-existent waste disposal systems, and the slum residents' overall economic vulnerabilities made them the most vulnerable.

More than four months later, no reliable data, however, can be found to determine whether coronavirus has wreaked havoc on the slums.

The Daily Star correspondents visited seven slums of Korail, Chalantika, Bhashantek, Bauniabandh, Abuler Basti and Lalashori recently and found residents saying the same thing time and again: There are no Covid-19 cases here.

"There have been no coronavirus patients in this slum. This is a rich man's disease," said one in Korail Basti early this month. Other slum dwellers made this claim so repeatedly that it was frankly, flummoxing.

"Why do you insist on talking about it? People are not getting any sicker than they used to be before," said Maulana Abdus Sobhan, chairperson of Korail Basti Unnayan Committee's Boubazaar unit.

Forty-year-old daily wage earner Kamrunnahar, who lives in the slum, said she did not find it necessary to wear a mask since "there was no coronavirus" case there.

"I need to think about what to eat at night, I can't worry about masks," said the woman, who used to work as a domestic help, but became unemployed in the coronavirus fallout.

Councillor of Ward-19 Mofizur Rahman echoed the thoughts of the slum residents, saying, "The rate of infection is very low here."

Talking to The Daily Star on July 21, Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), made a similar observation.

"We are undertaking a survey on the slums in the capital and we are not seeing the infection rate to be high," she said.

Geospatially, this is confusing. Chalantika, Bhashantek, and Bauniabandh, for example, are all in Mirpur, which consistently has had the highest number of Covid-19 cases in the city.

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The crowd at Badura cattle market in Golachipa upazila of Patuakhali makes it seem like there isn't a pandemic going on. When the photo was taken on Thursday afternoon, only a few policemen outside the premises were asking people to maintain social distancing using a megaphone. At least 960 people have tested positive for coronavirus in the district.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

CRITICISING KL

Malaysia will expel arrested Bangladeshi

Rights activists outraged

STAR REPORT

The Malaysian Immigration Department has said Rayhan Kabir, the detained Bangladeshi national, will be deported to Bangladesh and blacklisted for criticising Putrajaya's handling of migrants during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a brief statement, the agency confirmed that Rayhan was arrested by its intelligence unit on Friday afternoon from Setapak in Kuala Lumpur, following a two-week manhunt.

"This Bangladeshi national will be deported and blacklisted from entering Malaysia forever," said its Director-General Datuk Khairul Dzaimie Daud, reported Malay Mail.

Meanwhile, two lawyers -- Sumitha Shaanthinni Kishna (Chambers of Sumitha) and Selvaraja Chinniah (Messrs CR Selva) -- have been appointed to defend Rayhan Kabir.

"Pdrn [Royal Malaysian Police] and immigration have been informed [of the lawyers' appointment] via email today. In our letter, we have sought a date to

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In the name of the father and freedom

SHAHTUB SIDDIQUE ANIK

It was on World Freedom Day when Monorom Polok had to see his photojournalist father handcuffed and jailed.

Things were different over the previous 53 days during which Shafiqul Islam Kajol remained missing -- it was anxious wait and uncertainty for the family then -- but now it's a different battle altogether after he has been traced.

Many on social media may have already noticed a photo of Polok, the 20-year-old son of Kajol, with a placard reading "I demand release of my father Kajol" at the Central Shaheed Minar.

The youngster, all by himself, gave rise to a weeklong viral campaign titled "Freedom of Kajol and Free Thinking" and requested everyone to post a picture with "Free Kajol" written on a white paper from July 21 to 27 from their respective Facebook profile.

Over 300,000 people responded to his campaign. Singers, activists and intellectuals took part in Facebook live programmes in solidarity while a rally was staged in Shahbagh on Friday. More events would follow.

Around two days back, Polok wrote on Facebook, "My journalist and editor father has not been able to return home for 134 days now. We can't meet him even... I came back from the jail gate today. My father's crime was that he shared a news item of a national daily."

A third-year student of a public university, he feels helpless at times. He "cannot sleep, cannot eat, cannot do any regular stuff like before."

He is going through this at a time when the whole nation is badly affected by the Covid-19 outbreak. His mother was a research assistant but she lost her job after the pandemic hit.

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Covid-19 sample collection now below 10,000

2,520 test positive; 38 more die

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of samples collected in a 24-hour period for Covid-19 testing came down below the 10,000 mark yesterday -- first in the last two months.

This comes at a time when the health experts are continuously urging the authorities to ramp up Covid-19 testing.

During the 24-hour till 8:30am yesterday, 9,615 samples were collected across the country, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Earlier on May 28, 9,310 samples were collected.

Speaking at the regular online briefing yesterday, Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of DGHS,

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'Crossfire deaths' on the rise

35 killed so far this month

STAR REPORT

"Crossfires" with law enforcers claimed multiple lives every single day for the past six days, marking a deadly streak in extra-judicial killings.

Statistics obtained by Ain o Salish Kendra show that 35 people have been killed so far in "shootouts" in the month of July -- and the month is not even over yet.

In comparison, 143 people died in "crossfires" between January and June this year, averaging at 23 killings per month. Between late night Friday and the early hours of Saturday, four people died in "crossfires" in Cox's Bazar, Chattogram and Kushtia. All those killed were accused in various criminal cases, including of narcotics.

In Banshkhalia upazila of Chattogram, Sher Ali, an alleged robber was killed in what law enforcers claimed to be a "gunfight" with Rapid Action Battalion, in the early hours of yesterday.

"Sher Ali was killed in a shootout with Rab-7 in Saral union area of Banshkhalia," said Mahmudul Hasan Mamun, assistant director of Rab-7 (media wing).

"He was accused in at least 12 cases filed for murder and robbery with different police stations," he added.

The shootout took place in a deserted area underneath a bridge, around 1:00am, informed additional superintendent of police, Sohel Mahmud.

"The robbers had gathered at that spot, and RAB arrived there acting on a tip-off. The robbers, realising they've been found, shot at RAB. After the fight, Ali's body was recovered," he said.

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FAKE MASK SCAM

DU official placed on three-day remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed Sharmin Jahan, proprietor of Aparajita International, on a three-day remand in a case filed over supplying fake N95 masks to BSMMU's Covid-19 isolation unit.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Moinul Islam passed the order after Shah Md Akhteruzzaman Ilias, an inspector of Detective Branch of police and the investigation officer of the case, produced her before the court with a three-day remand prayer.

Sharmin, currently working as an assistant registrar at Dhaka University (DU), was arrested from the capital's Shahbagh area on Friday.

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Govt alone not to blame for health sector corruption

Says new DG of DGHS

BSS, Dhaka

Newly appointed DGHS Director General Dr Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam yesterday said the government alone was not responsible for the corruption in the country's health sector.

"People should not make the government responsible alone for the corruption in the health sector...we all are part of it, we all have to be honest from our respective positions," he said.

The new chief of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) made the remarks while talking to reporters after paying homage to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing a wreath at his portrait on Dhanmondi-32 in the capital.

"Overcoming the present situation is the biggest challenge before us," he said.

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An engine boat full of people is travelling in the haor while two threewheelers are plying "the road". Thanks to flooding, there is no way to tell where the haor ends and land begins. The photo of Sarail-Arui Road in KaliShimul area of Brahmanbaria was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDYO

MEDICAL COLLEGE ADMISSION TEST Same gang, over and over again

Question paper leaked despite ring leader Jasim behind bars; police now after their backers

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Just three days before the medical college entrance test in 2015, Rab said it arrested the ringleader and three members of the gang that leaked the questions.

But the gang still managed to leak the question papers ahead of the test on September 18, although its leader Jasim Uddin Bhuiyan Munnu was behind bars.

Although the news of the leak triggered widespread protests, the result was published after two days. In an attempt to deflect the allegations, an official of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said the medical college admission seekers did well in the test because they studied better. The then health minister Mohammed Nasim said the questions were not leaked.

Notwithstanding this, statements issued at different times by law enforcement agencies indicate that the same group of people have repeatedly leaked question sheets of medical college admission tests between 2013 and 2018.

Jasim Uddin Bhuiyan Munnu, the ringleader arrested in 2015, was also arrested in 2011 along with his 20 cohorts while attempting to leak the question sheets.

Officials said the suspects engaged in the same crime every time they got freed from jail.

The other members of the gang who were arrested by Rab in 2015, are: ZMA Salehin Showon, a doctor of a Noakhali Hospital; S M Sanowar Hossain, a teacher of E-Haque Coaching Centre; and Akhtaruzzaman Khan

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