

'TOO POWERFUL'
US antitrust panel chairman David Cicilline says on tech giants
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Premium Exterior Paint
BERGER Weather Coat ANTIDIRT SUPREME 10 YEARS DURABILITY

BANGLADESH UPDATE 2,695 New cases in 24hrs | 2,34,889 Total cases | 3,083 Deaths | 1,32,960 Recoveries | **GLOBAL UPDATE** 672,368 Deaths | 17,300,888 Total cases

Double blow to education

Pandemic, flood take toll on lakhs of primary, secondary students; remote learning severely disrupted

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Flood is hampering over 8 lakh students' access to remote learning, introduced to minimise disruptions to their education during the pandemic.

These students are not able to take part in lessons online and on TV, which they had been relying on the most since the coronavirus outbreak and the closure of schools on March 17.

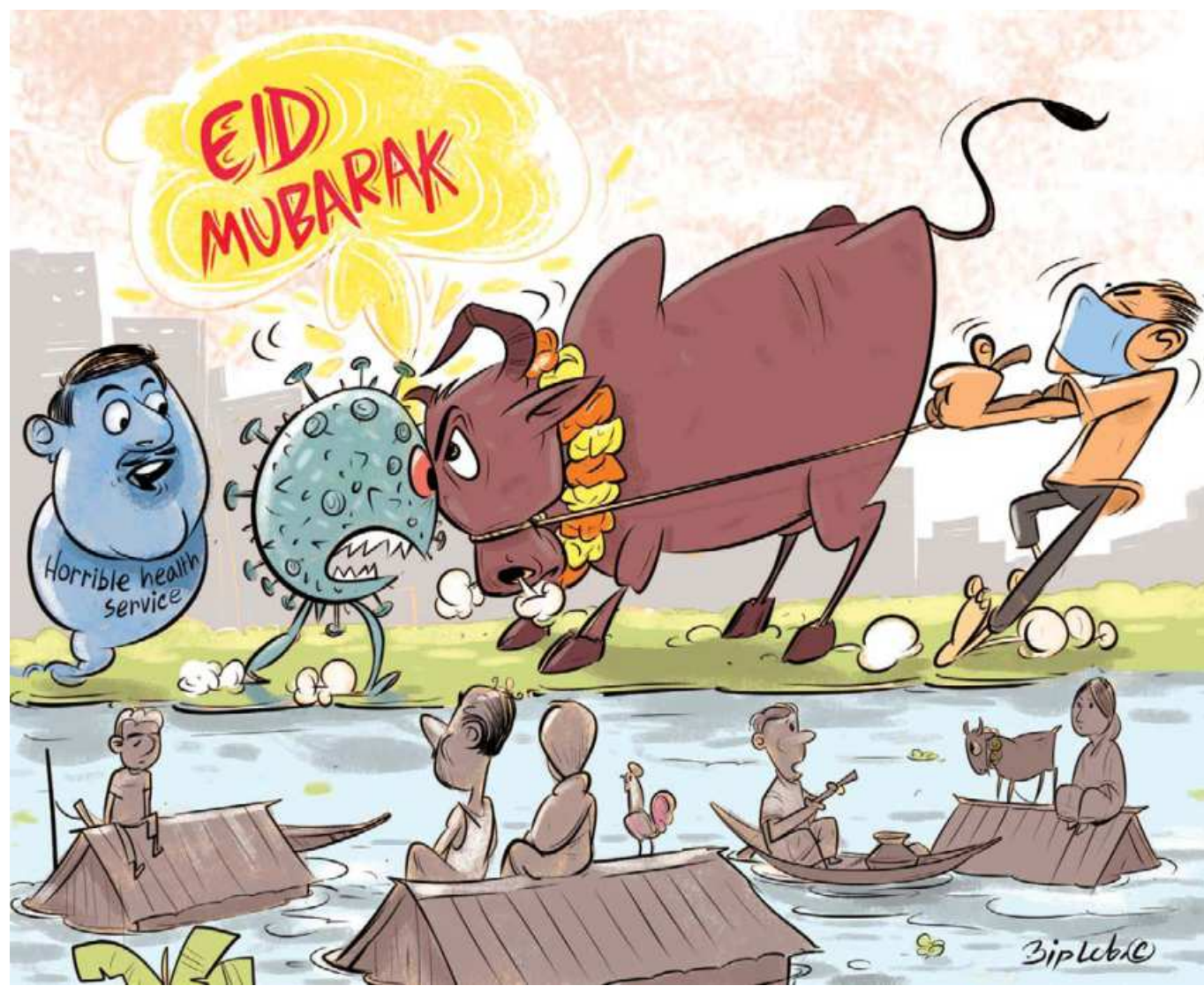
From late March and early April, the state-run Sangsad TV has been broadcasting classes for all students of primary and secondary levels and on several subjects for madrasa and technical students. It is broadcasting 10 classes a day for the secondary level students.

Apart from this, classes are also being held on Facebook and YouTube for primary- and secondary-level students in many areas.

But at least 10,000 of the flood-affected students have lost their books and other learning materials to the flood. Many were relocated to flood shelters, where there is no power or the supply is disrupted or they have taken shelter at places with no access to internet or TV.

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- ➔ Remote learning of **8 lakh** students affected
- ➔ Learning materials of **10,000** students washed away
- ➔ **38** primary schools went into rivers
- ➔ **394** primary schools being used as flood shelters
- ➔ **3,278** primary schools affected



EID MUBARAK
The Daily Star wishes its valued readers, patrons, advertisers and well-wishers a very happy Eid
HOLIDAY NOTICE
The Daily Star offices will remain closed for 4 days from today on account of Eid-ul-Azha. There will be no issue of the newspaper from August 1-4. However, our digital version will serve the readers 24/7 during the holiday.

GOING HOME FOR EID Not in droves this time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Long tailbacks on highways, crammed buses, launches and trains, and anxious faces of holidaymakers -- the usual scenes before every Eid are missing this time.

The number of people leaving the capital for the festival is relatively low this year.

Fears of contracting the deadly virus, economic hardship and floods in several parts of the country have forced thousands of holidaymakers to cancel their trips home to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha tomorrow with their loved ones.

Besides, the government has asked public servants to remain at workstations during Eid vacation.

According to estimates by transport operators, around 80 lakh to 1.15 crore people leave the capital to celebrate Eid every year. But their

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'Suspects' held 2 days before blast

Claim families of two detainees, calling into question police account

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

Contradicting the police account, family members of two of the suspects arrested in connection with the explosion at Pallabi Police Station said they were detained two days before the incident.

Family members and neighbours of two of the accused Shahidul Islam, 23, and Rafiqul Islam, 40, yesterday told The Daily Star that they were picked up by armed men in a black microbus on Monday from near their homes in Mirpur.

But officers said that Pallabi police raided Kalshi area around 2:00am on Wednesday and arrested three men, including the two, with two pistols, four bullets and a weighing machine fitted with bombs that exploded at the police station hours later.

Bus driver Shahidul was detained by several armed men while he was at a tea stall near his home in Bauniabadi area around 3:45pm, said Shamim, the stall owner.

Shahidul's mother Peyari Begum filed a general diary with Pallabi Police Station a few hours later. The family also filed a complaint with Rab-4 in this connection the next day.

Describing the incident, shopkeeper Shamim said Shahidul and his cousin Selim were having snacks and hanging out at his stall when "two or three men in plainclothes carrying firearms got off a black microbus. One of them left his DB [detective branch] vest inside the vehicle. Then they asked, 'Are you Shahidul?' The moment

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DMP to probe whether bomb was handled properly

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) yesterday formed a three-member committee to investigate the explosion incident inside the capital's Pallabi Police Station on early Wednesday.

The committee would try to figure out the nature of the explosive and whether it was handled properly inside the police station, according to an order signed by DMP commissioner Shafiqul Islam.

The committee, led by DMP Joint Commissioner (operations) Md Monir Hossain, has been asked to submit its report within three working days.

Monir told The Daily Star that they started an investigation but it was too early to comment.

The two other members of the committee are Rahmatullah Chowdhury,

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TRIAL OF CHINESE VACCINE Govt indecision puzzles experts

PORIMOL PALMA and MOUJIB AHMED SUJAN

It remains a mystery why Bangladesh government is still in a fix about allowing a clinical trial of the Chinese Covid-19 vaccine here when health experts are saying the trial can help the country access the life-saving vaccine quickly and build national capacity for advanced research.

Globally, more than 100 organisations are working on Covid-19 vaccine development and governments are investing billions of dollars to get the vaccine at the soonest. The UK and US have also signed contracts with vaccine producers to this end.

Against this backdrop, it is an opportunity for Bangladesh to conduct a clinical trial of the vaccine here. The country should invite not only China, but also other countries for vaccine research so it can be part of the global initiatives to fight the pandemic, say medical researchers.

Recently, Bangladesh Medical Research Council (BMRC), the regulator for medical research, has approved the trial of a vaccine developed by Chinese company -- Sinovac Research and Development Co Ltd -- for coronavirus treatment, after more than a month of review.

The company selected icddr, a globally reputed medical research organisation, as its local partner in Bangladesh.

Making the decision public on July 19, BMRC Director Mahmood-uz-Jahan said icddr would now have to follow some procedures and get permissions from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) for conducting the trial.

He also said the trial would be conducted on around 4,200 healthcare staffers.

But two days later, a private TV channel, quoting Health Secretary Abdul Mannan, reported that the approval for the trial was overturned.

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No Eid joy for them this time

Thousands face food crisis in flood-hit areas

STAR REPORT

Sixty-year-old Hormuj Ali of Char Kharibari Shoal village in Nilphamari's Dimla upazila, along with his six family members, returned home from local flood shelter but almost nothing of his home was left.

The devastation of the mighty Teesta devoured his homestead. Sitting on a piece of wood in his ruined yard, the elderly was worried about upcoming Eid-ul-Azha as he was completely empty handed.

Although the man received 10 kg rice from the government ahead of Eid but the amount was so insufficient that it would be finished a day before the festival arrives.

Talking to The Daily Star on Wednesday, he said, "I don't know how I could manage some money to bring some special food for my family members on the special day."

Like Hormuj, millions of flood victims are in the same condition. Eid-ul-Azha would bring no joy to those struggling with sufficient supply of food and drinking water.

In the flood-hit regions, many people have left their houses and taken shelter on flood centres, roads, embankments, rail lines and other safe places.

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Daily Covid death toll rises again

48 deaths, 2,695 cases in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The daily death toll from coronavirus infections spiked again as authorities reported 48 deaths yesterday, up from 36 on Wednesday.

In 24 hours till 8:30am yesterday, 2,695 people tested positive for the virus.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque, however, said the infection rate of novel coronavirus was decreasing slowly.

Yesterday's figures took the death toll to 3,083 -- around 1.31 percent of all confirmed cases. The total number of cases in the country stood at 2,34,889 as of yesterday.

In the 24-hour period, 12,937 samples were tested at 82 labs across the country.

The positivity rate was 20.83 percent yesterday, Prof Dr Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of the Directorate General of

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Illegal structures built on the southern side of Buckland Bund at Badamtali Ghat near Sadarghat terminal in the capital. This part of the dam is under the supervision of the BIWTA. Inset, a city corporation market set up illegally on the northern side of the dam near the terminal. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Misfortune of a MAJESTIC LANDMARK

Historic Buckland Bund stands years of abuse

TARUN SARKAR writes for The Daily Star

Instead of protecting the Buckland Bund of Old Dhaka, its custodians have been busy erecting illegal structures on the historic dam and its periphery since 1984.

The 1.6-kilometre Bund and its northern side is currently the responsibility of the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), while the southern side, including a portion of the Buriganga river's foreshore, is a responsibility of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

When the dam was handed over to the then Dhaka City Corporation in the 1980s, it almost immediately started building a number of one-storey markets on the northern portion of the dam near Sadarghat and Waizghat.

Though at one point the corporation stopped construction on the dam facing opposition from locals, private businesses continued to commit the misdeed right under the custodian's nose.

Today, the entire northern side of the Bund, except for the area of the Ahsan Manzil, is occupied by encroachers.

The corporation's construction frenzy and inaction against land grabbers also erased the existence of two British-era parks near the dam.

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