

Holy Ashura

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pandemic this year, programmes have been taken up on a limited scale to mark the occasion. Police have taken special security measures in the capital in this regard.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police has banned all kinds of tazia, mourning and pike processions in the metropolitan area.

However, devotees will be able to perform religious rites in compliance with the health safety rules. But carrying of knives, daggers, scissoring, spears, swords, sticks and displaying of fireworks and crackers is strictly prohibited in these programmes.

The DMP urged the authorities concerned not to allow anybody to enter a function venue without wearing masks. It asked everyone to enforce necessary health safety measures at all stages.

Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television and private TV channels are airing special programmes while newspapers and news portals have published supplements highlighting the significance of the day.

Bangabandhu

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China today threatens to use its veto again to stop Bangladesh's entry into the UN if the UN resolution on Indo-Pak conflict passed in December 1971 is not implemented properly.

BANGLADESH WILL BUY IRAQI CRUDE OIL

Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abdu Samad Azad today says in Baghdad that his visit to Iraq has opened a new chapter in the relationship between Bangladesh and Iraq. Bangladesh is considering the establishment of diplomatic relations with Iraq. The country will buy crude oil from Iraq, he adds.

Bangladesh foreign minister further says, "The attitude of Bangladesh towards fighting Zionism is well known. Bangladesh condemns the Israeli aggression against the Arab states and backs those countries in liberating their territory."

SOURCES: August 31, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

Positivity rate

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percent continuously.
Meanwhile, new 32 Covid-19 patients died in hospitals during the past 24 hours till 8:30am yesterday. No Covid-19 related death was recorded in the same period, according to the press release.

The total number of deaths due to Covid-19 rose to 4,206 -- 1.36 percent of all confirmed cases.

Besides, the total number of confirmed cases reached at 3,08,925.

In the same 24 hours yesterday, a total of 2,027 Covid-19 patients recovered from their illness, taking the total number of recoveries to 198,863 which is 64.37 percent of all confirmed cases.

Six of the yesterday's dead were females and 26 were males.

Eighteen of the dead were over 60 years of age while two aged between 31 and 40, seven between 41 and 50, and five between 51 and 60 years.

Three were from Rangpur and Sylhet divisions each, five from Barishal, one from Khulna, nine from Chattogram and 11 from Dhaka division.

So far, nearly half of all Covid-19 casualties were from Dhaka division, according to the DGHS.

Of the Covid-19 patients, who were undergoing treatment in those 24 hours, 3,798 were in general beds and 320 were in intensive care units (ICUs) across the country.

GONOSHASTHAYA NAGAR HOSPITAL STARTS RT-PCR TESTING

The authorities of the Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital in Dhaka have launched an rt-PCR testing laboratory at their hospital yesterday.

Prof Nazrul Islam, former vice chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital (BSMMU), inaugurated the laboratory as the chief guest.

Covid-19 Real Time Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction or rt-PCR test is prescribed to detect coronavirus in the respiratory tract through a naso-pharyngeal swab collected from a patient.

It can detect the virus even if the viral load is less.

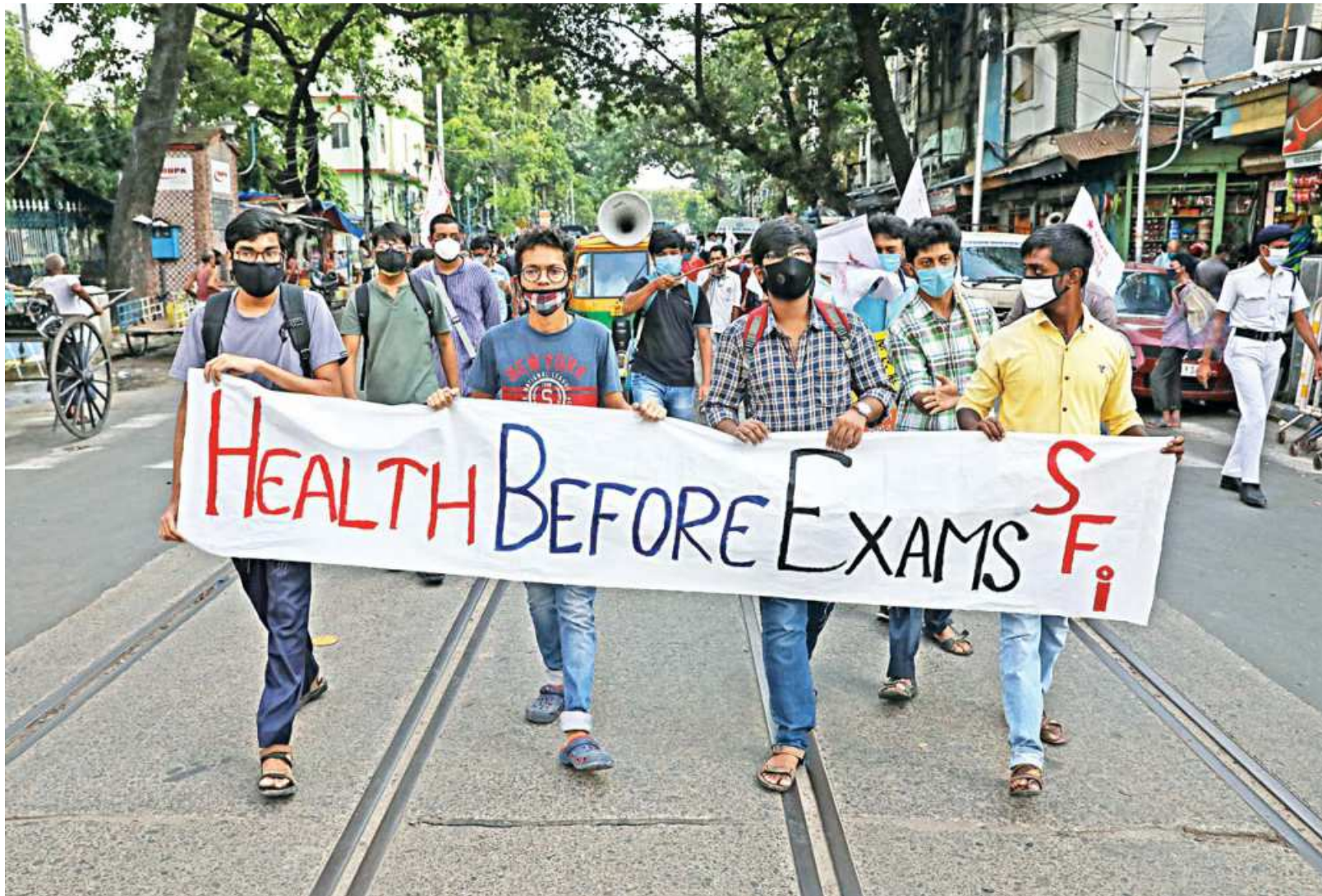
UNSC calls

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this effort must lead to the involvement of women "at all levels and in all positions, including in senior leadership positions."

UN member states are invited to develop "strategies and measures to increase the deployment of uniformed women to peacekeeping operations" through information campaigns, training and identifying obstacles to the recruitment and promotion of women peacekeepers.

The text highlighted the "indispensable role of women in increasing the overall performance and effectiveness of peacekeeping operations."

"The presence of women and better balance between men and women among peacekeepers contribute to, among others, greater credibility of the missions among the population," the resolution said.



Students wearing protective face masks carry a banner as they participate in a protest march demanding postponement of admission tests to medical and engineering schools amidst the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), in Kolkata, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Buses to run at full capacity from Sept 1

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hand sanitizer and other hand washing essentials, he said adding that buses have to be disinfected before and after each trip.

Besides, he also given necessary directives to BRTA, Highway Police, district and police administration to take action against those who violate the directives.

The government is going to normalise bus service at a time when the number of new infections and deaths from Covid-19 are still on the

rise and health experts said allowing full-scale movement of public transports would definitely increase the transmission of the coronavirus.

Besides, the organisations working for road safety and passengers' welfare are also sceptical about whether the bus operators, against whom allegations of extra-charging are very rampant, would take the actual previous fare and whether health safety guidelines would be maintained.

Public transport services, including buses and minibuses, resumed on

June 1 after more than two months. The government suspended the services on March 26 to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

Following demands made by transport leaders, the government hiked bus fares by 60 percent from June 1 on the condition that buses would carry passengers at half capacity and follow health safety guidelines.

But complaints on the breach of the aforementioned conditions kept pouring in.

Against this backdrop, bus owners on August 16 wrote to the ministry and BRTA to allow them to operate their vehicles at full capacity at the previous fares, claiming that the coronavirus situation is gradually getting back to normal.

The owners reiterated the same demands at the stakeholders' meeting convened by BRTA on August 19.

On the following day, BRTA wrote to the road transport and bridges ministry to take necessary steps in this regard.

France tries to avert lockdown

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to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP at 1100 GMT yesterday.

More than 24.7 million cases have been registered.

The United States has recorded the highest number of deaths with 181,779, followed by Brazil with 119,504, Mexico with 63,164, India with 62,550 and Britain with 41,486 fatalities.

Like other hard-hit western European countries, France imposed a sudden and strict lockdown in March, during which most residents were confined to their homes. The restrictions were gradually lifted from May 11 after infections sharply dropped.

The reopening of schools on Tuesday next week has been widely anticipated as a major step back towards normality. More than 12 million children will return to school,

most for the first time in more than five months.

So far, the rapid increase in case numbers has yet to lead to a similar surge in hospitalisations or deaths. The ministry reported 20 new COVID-19 deaths on Friday, raising the cumulative total to 30,596. The number of people in hospital with the disease was unchanged at 4,535 and the number in intensive care rose by six to 387.

Authorities say the virus is now spreading among younger people who are less likely to show severe symptoms.

Berlin police call for the dispersal of a mass demonstration against pandemic restrictions and mask wearing because participants are not respecting social distancing measures.

Thousands of coronavirus sceptics have descended on Berlin for the protest that has been allowed to go

ahead after a bitter legal battle.

In India, authorities reported 76,472 new coronavirus cases yesterday, slightly lower than the record breaking numbers of the past couple of days, but extending a run that has made the country's outbreak currently the world's worst.

India has reported a total of 3.46 million cases during the pandemic, a tally that places them behind the United States and Brazil in terms of total caseload.

However, the south Asian country has reported higher single-day case rises than both those countries for almost two weeks.

India's death toll rose by 1,021 to 62,550, data from the federal health ministry showed, even as local media reported that some nationwide restrictions on travel could be eased from next week.

The government might allow

underground train networks to partially reopen, local media reported, an easing that Delhi's chief minister has said is necessary to get the city back to full speed.

The western Indian state of Maharashtra, home to India's financial capital Mumbai, recorded 331 fatalities, the steepest single-day increase among all states over the past two days.

Meanwhile, German police yesterday halted a march by some 18,000 coronavirus sceptics in Berlin because many were not respecting social distancing measures. The mass protest against pandemic restrictions had been allowed to go ahead after a bitter legal battle.

But it had barely begun at 0900 GMT at the city's iconic Brandenburg Gate, when it was forced to stop due to a police injunction triggering anger among its participants.

World's biggest rooftop greenhouse opens in Montreal

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"The company's mission is to grow food where people live and in a sustainable way," spokesman Thibault Sorret told AFP, as he showed off its first harvest of giant eggplants.

It is the fourth rooftop greenhouse the company has erected in the city. The first, built in 2011 at a cost of more than Can\$2 million (US\$1.5 million), broke new ground.

Since then, competitors picked up and ran with the novel idea, including American Gotham Greens, which constructed eight greenhouses on roofs in New York, Chicago and Denver, and French Urban Nature, which is planning one in Paris in

2022.
A local Montreal supermarket has also offered since 2017 an assortment of vegetables grown on its roof, which was "greened" in order to cut greenhouse gas emissions linked to climate change.

Lebanese-born Mohamed Hage and his wife Lauren Rathmell, an American from neighboring Vermont, founded Lufa Farms in 2009 with the ambition of "reinventing the food system."

At Lufa, about 100 varieties of vegetables and herbs are grown year-round in hydroponic containers lined with coconut coir and fed liquid nutrients, including lettuce, cucumbers, zucchini, bok choy, celery

and sprouts.
Bumblebees pollinate the plants, while wasps and ladybugs keep aphids in check, without the need for pesticides.

Enough vegetables are harvested each week to feed 20,000 families, with baskets tailored for each at a base price of Can\$30.

On the ground floor of the new greenhouse, a huge distribution center brings together nearly 2,000 grocery products for offer to "Lufavores," including restaurants.

Shopper Catherine Bonin tells AFP she loves the freshness of the produce but laments that some items are always out of stock. "I can never get peppers," she says.

"We are now able to feed almost two percent of Montreal with our greenhouses and our partner farms," said Sorret.

Fully automated, the new greenhouse also has a water system that collects and reuses rainwater, resulting in savings of "up to 90 percent" compared to a traditional farm.

Lufa "more than doubled" its sales during the new coronavirus pandemic, a jump attributable "to contactless delivery from our online site," says Sorret.

Profitable since 2016, the private company now employs 500 people, around 200 more than before the pandemic, according to him.

BRT to be linked to metro rail

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government agency implementing the metro rail project, informing it about the meeting.

The letter said if a link service between Diabari and House Building was established, people of Motijheel, Mirpur, Uttara and Gazipur would enjoy an uninterrupted transport network through the "transport mode transfer" system.

"And that would increase the acceptability of both the MRT and the BRT projects," the letter reads.

It also mentioned that consultant firm of the GDSUIP has already completed topography survey and feasibility study over an existing road. Although the project director of BRT has sought some information from DMTC in January and June to finalise the road alignment, he did not get any response, it said.

"We have called the meeting to discuss the link service issue, because coordination is necessary between the two projects for the passengers' benefit," Neelima told The Daily Star yesterday.

Asked whether buses or any other mode of transport would be used in

the "link service", she said it was not decided yet.

Contacted, DMTC's Managing Director MAN Siddique acknowledged receiving such a proposal recently.

He said apart from the BRT authorities, Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation and some private bus operators have already given proposal on introducing a "link service" between MRT-6 and BRT.

But, DMTC did not respond as it was yet to fix a concrete deadline to start metro rail operation, he said.

"We also support a link service but that should be a dedicated one between the stoppages," he told The Daily Star on Friday. "We hope to hear of a concrete proposal from the BRT authorities at the meeting," he said.

DMTC earlier set December 2021 for starting operation of the country's first metro rail, but the Covid-19 pandemic has slowed down the works, casting doubt whether the authorities would be able to meet the deadline. Once completed, metro rail would carry 60,000 passengers per hour.

The BRT authorities have now set a fresh deadline of June 2022.

Undocumented

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and out of the country from August 1, with 30 percent of its airport's normal capacity.

The oil-rich country has plans to fully resume the operation of its airports from August next year, according to Gulf News.

The Arab Times report, citing Arabic-language daily Al-Qabas, said the interior ministry has completed its plan to launch the "unprecedented security campaigns" to arrest residency violators who are in hiding and refused to take the advantage of April's amnesty offered by the ministry.

The report mentioned the 75,000 residency violators are now unable to amend their residency status because they have been in violation for a very long time.

Bangladeshi migrant workers in Kuwait have been facing multifaceted challenges amid the emerging situation of the Covid-19 fallout. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, Kuwait asked several labour-sending countries, including Bangladesh, to take back their undocumented workers from the Gulf country.

Kuwait also warned that the countries that will not take back their undocumented workers might

not get priority when it starts fresh recruitment of workers.

In July, Kuwait approved a bill that, once passed, may force about two lakh Bangladeshi migrant workers out of the Gulf country.

The bill, submitted by five MPs, calls for an expatriate quota system in Kuwait, one of the major sources of Bangladesh's remittance inflow.

It proposes Bangladeshis must not exceed three percent of Kuwait's total populace, which now stands at about 48 lakh.

Currently, around 3.5 lakh Bangladeshis are employed in different sectors of the oil-rich country.

Once the bill is passed and turns into a law, only about 1.5 lakh Bangladeshis will be allowed to stay there.

Last year, Bangladeshi migrant workers sent more than \$1.5 billion in remittance from Kuwait.

Between April 1 and August 26 this year, some 7,549 Bangladeshi migrant workers including 71 female workers returned home from Kuwait, said expatriates' welfare ministry data.

Apart from workers returned under a general amnesty, the returnees also included those who served jail terms in the Gulf country.

Rab takes

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dead ex-army major Sinha Mohammad Rashed Khan, who was producing a travel documentary, at Shamlapur checkpoint.

After the incident, police sub-inspector Nanda Dulal Rakshit filed a case with Teknaf police station on August 1 with Nurul, Nizamuddin and Awaj as witnesses.

Later on August 5, Sinha's elder sister Sharmin Shahria Ferdous filed another case with Teknaf Senior Judicial Magistrate Court accusing nine policemen and others, where the trio was accused in the case.

Contacted, IO Khairul Islam said the three accused were taken to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital for medical tests at around 11:45AM and then to the Rab-15 office in Cox's Bazar.

Earlier, Rab also quizzed the three prime accused of the case -- suspended OC of Teknaf Police Station Pradeep Kumar Das, former in-charge of Baharchhara Police Investigation Centre Liakat Ali and sub-inspector Nanda Dulal.

Riot in Sweden after anti-Muslim Danish leader banned

AFP, Stockholm

At least 10 people were arrested in southern Sweden and several police officers were injured in violence which broke out after an anti-Muslim Danish politician was blocked from attending a Koran-burning rally, police said yesterday.

Protesters threw stones at police and burned tyres on the streets of Malmo late Friday, with violence escalating as the evening wore on, according to police and local media.

The demonstration of about 300 people was connected to an incident earlier in the day in which protesters burned a copy of the Islamic holy book, police spokesman Rickard Lundqvist told Swedish tabloid Expressen.

Between 10 and 20 protesters were arrested late Friday and "have all been released," police spokesman Patric Fors told AFP.

The violence had subsided by Saturday morning.

Rasmus Paludan, who leads the far-right Danish anti-immigration party Hard Line, was due to travel to Malmo to speak at Friday's event, which was being held on the same day as weekly prayers for the Muslim sabbath.

But authorities pre-empted Paludan's arrival by announcing he had been banned from entering Sweden for two years. He was later arrested near Malmo.

"We suspect that he was going to break the law in Sweden," Calle Persson, spokesman for the police in Malmo told AFP.

"There was also a risk that his behaviour... would pose a threat to society."

But his supporters went ahead with the rally, during which six people were arrested for inciting racial hatred.

Paludan later put up a scathing message on Facebook.

"Sent back and banned from Sweden for two years. However, rapists and murderers are always welcome!" he wrote.

Mali junta postpones first meeting over transfer of powers

AFP, Bamako

Mali military rulers yesterday said they were postponing their first meeting over the transfer of powers due to "organisational reasons" nearly two weeks after ousting the president in a coup.

The junta had invited civic groups, political organisations and former rebels to consultations on Saturday, but said in a statement that the meeting was postponed to a later date.

A protest coalition that had campaigned against former president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, the June 5 Movement, had not been invited to participate in the meeting.

The group has demanded that the military junta give it a role in the transition to civilian rule which the military has promised, though without a timetable.

After an escalating series of mass protests, young army officers mutinied on August 18, seizing Keita and other leaders and declaring they now governed the country.

The coup shocked Mali's West African neighbours and ally France, heightening worries over instability in a country already struggling with an Islamist insurgency, ethnic violence and economic malaise.

Mali's influential imam Mahmoud Dicko, a key player in the mass opposition protests that led to Keita's ouster, said Friday that the new military rulers did not have "carte blanche".

His comments came as a new document published on the Malian government's Official Journal said the junta's head had been effectively invested with the powers of head of state.

West African leaders, meanwhile, on Friday demanded an immediate civilian transition and elections within 12 months as they considered sanctions.