



JAPAN PM RACE
Abe loyalist
Yoshihide Suga
cements his
status as the clear
frontrunner
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Your Right to Know

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**BANGLADESH
UPDATE**



1,950
New cases in 24hrs



3,14,946
Total cases



4,316
Deaths



2,08,177
Recoveries

**GLOBAL
UPDATE**



855,383
Deaths



25,665,001
Total cases

TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

Jail straightaway, not rehabilitation

PORIMOL PALMA and RAFIUL ISLAM

Eighty-one migrant workers who returned to the country after being exploited in Vietnam for months were thrown into jail yesterday, whereas the perpetrators either remain scot-free or face little action.

Terming these Bangladeshis victims of human trafficking, migrant rights activists have come down hard on the authorities for arresting them, instead of ensuring their protection and rehabilitation.

The 81 are among 107 migrants who were deported from the Southeast Asian country on August 18.

At the end of their 14-day quarantine, Turag Police Station Sub-Inspector Md Anwarul Islam produced them before a metropolitan magistrate yesterday, showing them arrested under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

The SI prayed to the court to keep them in jail until the probe was over.

The court then sent the 81 to jail and freed the 26 others. Two other migrant workers, who returned from Qatar, also landed in jail.

Talking to The Daily Star, one of the 26 workers said the Vietnam returnees were thrown into jail when they were preparing to go home and meet their families at the end of their quarantine at a government

facility in Uttara's Diabari area.

The man also said he believed the 81 workers were arrested as they had demonstrated in front of the Bangladesh embassy in Vietnam, demanding justice and repatriation.

In his report, SI Anwarul said that the arrestees were earlier convicted in those countries or sentenced to different terms for their involvement in criminal activities. When the coronavirus outbreak surged worldwide, their sentences were commuted and they were sent back to Bangladesh.

"Their criminal activities have tarnished the country's image and also put a negative impact on the labour industry," he said. After returning to Bangladesh, they allegedly divided into groups while in quarantine and were planning subversive activities against the government, the report claimed.

If these returnees are released, they can engage in various crimes, including robbery, family violence, killing and militancy, the SI argued.

Police also said before sending them back home, the Vietnam authorities wrote to their Bangladeshi counterparts, urging them to take necessary steps.

Several returnees, however, trash the police allegation that the 81 were jailed in Vietnam.

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With traffic rebounding up to almost pre-coronavirus levels, vehicles are caught up in a long tailback at the capital's Jatrahari intersection around 1:00pm yesterday, the first day of reinstatement of previous fares of public transport. The government had hiked bus fares by 60 percent from June 1 on condition that buses would carry passengers at half capacity and follow other health safety guidelines.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Online editions of newspapers to get priority

*Info minister assures
Editors' Council on
new registration rules*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Information Minister Hasan Mahmud yesterday said measures would be taken to register online versions of newspapers on a priority basis.

At the same time, the government will take necessary steps to pay the arrears to newspapers for publishing government advertisements and supplements on different occasions.

The information minister told this to reporters after a meeting with Sampadak Parishad (Editors' Council), a platform of editors of different national dailies, at his secretariat office.

Editors of different newspapers joined the meeting. At the meeting, the editors requested the

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For rural economy, burden gets heavy

*Urban informal workers, professionals, returnee
expatriates converging on ill-prepared villages*

NILIMA JAHAN

Nargis Akhter, Md Lokman and their three children -- are one of many families who moved to their village homes or hometowns from cities due to the continuing Covid-19 economic fallout.

Lokman worked as a day labourer when he first arrived in Dhaka, and until recently, was a pick-up van driver. The family lived on a monthly income of Tk 18,000, paying rent and utilities worth Tk 4,000 for a single room and spending the rest on food and their children's education.

When the shutdown started in late March, however, Lokman had no earnings and fell four months behind in rent. At the time, the family was entirely dependent on handouts and loans from their relatives and friends.

"We thought when the lockdown ended, everything would get back to normal," said Nargis.

In June, when the shutdown ended, Lokman failed to make enough to pay back several months of rent and other expenses. Their landlord gave them notice to vacate



the room.

"We thought over and over again what to do, and finally realised that we might be able to manage food with the income, but it is impossible to pay the rent and repay the loans," Nargis said.

So, last month, the family of five moved to their village home in Kalmakanda, Netrokona. Lokman managed to lease two kathas of land at Tk 15,000 -- that he borrowed from acquaintances in the village -- for farming, and hopes to produce enough paddy for the family to get by for six months.

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Submit charts of fees for medical tests by Sept 9

*HC orders private hospitals,
clinics, diagnostic centres*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday sought the revised chart for medical test fees at private clinics, hospitals and diagnostic centres.

The court asked the authorities concerned to submit it by September 9.

During the hearing of a long-pending writ petition, the HC also ordered them to inform it of the progress in formulating guidelines to monitor the clinics, hospitals and diagnostic centres under the Medical Practice and Private Clinics and Laboratories (Regulation) Ordinance-1982 to it by September 9.

The bench of Justice IBM Hassan and Justice Md Khairul Alam came up with the order and rule after hearing the petition filed by Human Rights Lawyers and Securing Environment Society of Bangladesh seeking necessary orders so that the private clinics, hospitals and diagnostic centres run properly.

Petitioner's lawyer Bashir Ahmed told The Daily Star that the HC sought the revised chart as private healthcare facilities

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PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Pre-Covid fare, health rules not followed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As transport owners began operating buses at full capacity yesterday, many passengers alleged they were being overcharged by some private operators.

Bus operators were directed to reinstate the pre-pandemic fares and ensure health safety guideline as they restored services in full swing, a large number of bus commuters were seen without masks.

Some buses were also seen carrying passengers beyond their seating capacity, exposing many passengers to the deadly virus, in case of an asymptomatic carrier -- a clear violation of the government directives.

Following demands of the road transport owners, the government on August 29 decided to allow the transport owners to carry passengers at full capacity from yesterday on the condition of reinstating the pre-pandemic fares.

The authority also set several conditions that included -- no transport would be allowed to carry passengers beyond its seating capacity, all passengers, drivers, bus staffers have to wear masks; the transport companies must have hand sanitisers and other hand washing essentials, buses have to be disinfected before and after each trip.

The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) has deployed its 11 executive magistrates to conduct mobile courts in Dhaka and Chattogram to take punitive action against those who violate the conditions.

One executive magistrate who conducted a mobile court in Dhaka said he found some 40 incidents where traffic rules and health safety guidelines were violated yesterday and he filed six to seven cases of overcharging.

"Most of the bus operators had no hand sanitisers. Since it was the first day [of operation after the temporary shutdown], I didn't fine them but warned of taking punitive action from next week if they failed to take necessary health safety measures," he told this correspondent wishing not to be named.

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Adieu, Pranab

STAR REPORT

Amidst a nationwide outpour of grief and tributes, former Indian President Pranab Mukherjee was cremated in New Delhi with full military honours yesterday afternoon.

The last rites of 84-year-old Mukherjee, who died at an army hospital in Delhi cantonment after battling multiple illnesses, including Covid-19, took place at the Lodhi Road crematorium in the presence of his family members and relatives in personal protective equipment (PPE) kits, conforming to Covid-19 protocols.

Mukherjee's son performed his last rites as

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Children play in a field submerged in rainwater in the capital's Dholaiarpur area yesterday. At a time when parents are wrestling with what their children can and can't do to be safe from Covid-19, some come out of their homes and play with their friends. With their schools closed, many children had to stay within the confinement of four walls for months.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

EC backtracks on RPO reform

*Shelves proposal for dropping
provisions on cancellation of
candidature*

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Following criticism from different quarters, the Election Commission has made a U-turn on its plan to revise the Representation of the People Order (RPO), 1972.

Several important provisions that empower the EC to cancel the candidature of candidates and announce election schedule were absent in the proposed revised RPO.

The EC has also backtracked from its decisions to change the name of the RPO and give Bangla names to different local government bodies and their associated positions.

The commission during a meeting on Monday approved the draft of the Local Government Election Conducting Act 2020 without any provision for changing the names, said EC Senior Secretary Md Alamgir.

"We will keep traditional names of local government bodies and the associated positions," he said.

When asked why they shelved their earlier decision, Alamgir said changing the names was a proposal. "Changes can be brought to a proposed law until it is passed by the parliament," he said.

Alamgir said the draft of the law would be uploaded to the website of the EC soliciting opinions of all stakeholders before it is sent to the law ministry for vetting.

The new law will be a comprehensive law to conduct local government elections, he said.

Currently, there are five separate laws to hold different local government elections.

In the draft version of the law, the EC proposed renaming city corporation to 'mahanagar sabha', pourasabha to 'nagarsabha', union parishad to 'palli parishad' and ward to 'mahalla'.

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