

'DANGEROUS FALLACY'
More than 80 global experts
slam concept of coronavirus
herd immunity
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Your Right to Know

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"Evidence shows that the certainty of punishment, rather than its severity, deters crime."
UN RIGHTS CHIEF MICHELLE BACHELET ON BANGLADESH'S
DECISION TO IMPOSE DEATH PENALTY FOR RAPISTS



"It has been seen that mostly ruling party men are behind the crimes [recent rape incidents]. It is the ruling party's responsibility to clean up the party..."
NARIPOKKHO FOUNDER MEMBER SHIREEN HUQ



"The EU is working on a deal, but not at any price. Conditions must be right."
CHARLES MICHEL, PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL,
AHEAD OF MAKE-OR-BREAK EU SUMMIT ON BREXIT

Too pricey to be on menu of many

Prices of 5 basic food items rose by Tk 5 to Tk 110 a kg over 2 months

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

While people of middle- and low-income groups are still struggling to get over the loss of income caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, soaring price of daily essentials is compounding their problems.

The situation has become so dire for some that the minimum amount of food on everyday menu -- rice, potato, edible oil, green chili and onion -- is being considered luxury as prices of these five basic items have increased by Tk 5 to Tk 110 per kg over the last two months.

"If the situation persists, people like us will start starving," said Amir Ali, an auto-rickshaw mechanic.

Amir's wife Jotsna used to work in a garment factory but that has been closed. She now works as a domestic help to meet their expenses.

"In normal times, we find it difficult to provide our children with good food. It has turned worse now," said Amir, a father of two who lives in the capital's Muga.

Two months ago, the price of a kg of potato was Tk 26. Yesterday, it was Tk 50. The price of onion is yet to drop from Tk 90 per kg. Onion price doubled between September 15 and September 17 from Tk 40-45 after India banned export of the key ingredient.

Green chili which was Tk 105 per kg on August 15 is now being sold at Tk 220 per kg. Not only that, the price of vegetables sharply rose in recent weeks. The price of coarse rice has gone up by Tk 3 to Tk 5 per kg.

Price of edible oil also soared. A week ago, the price of a 5-liter container of soyabean oil was between Tk 495 and Tk 505. Now, these are being sold at Tk 515 to Tk 530 at different markets.

The Daily Star correspondent visited different kitchen markets in the capital and compared the prices with the TCB price list for the last two months.

"You won't find any vegetable less than Tk 70 per kg," said Hosne Ara, who runs a tailor shop.

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POTATO
TK 50-52
TWO MONTHS AGO
TK 25-26

RICE (COARSE)
TK 52
TWO MONTHS AGO
TK 48

ONION
TK 90
TWO MONTHS AGO
TK 45

SUGAR (LOOSE)
TK 60
TWO MONTHS AGO
TK 55-58

GREEN CHILLI
TK 220
TWO MONTHS AGO
TK 105

BITTER GOURD
TK 80
TWO MONTHS AGO
TK 60

PAPAYA
TK 35
TWO MONTHS AGO
TK 20

OKRA
TK 60
TWO MONTHS AGO
TK 40

Double trouble for the poor amid pandemic

Rising prices of essentials force many to cut food intake, use up savings

WASIM BIN HABIB and MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

House help Salma Khatun and her rickshaw-puller husband Forkan Ali saved their hard-earned money for the future of their two daughters.

But the outbreak of the novel coronavirus and the subsequent shutdown threw their life into disarray, leaving them jobless for three months. The crisis forced them to spend their entire savings of around Tk 50,000 and borrow an additional Tk 20,000 to make ends meet.

Although the couple is now trying hard to turn things around, they are grappling with the ever-increasing prices of food and other basic commodities.

"Our earnings have been fallen, but expenditure is on the rise. And the soaring prices of essentials are making matters worse. Before the pandemic, we used to eat fish and meat more often. Now, we have no option but to cut down on those," said a frustrated Salma.

"I slash other expenses to cover the

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EC sues MP Nixon Chy for violating polls code

STAR REPORT

The Election Commission filed a case against Faridpur-4 lawmaker Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury, known as Nixon Chowdhury, for violating the election code of conduct during the Charbhadrasan upazila parishad by-elections.

Nawabul Islam, the returning officer of the Charbhadrasan by-election, filed the case against Nixon with Charbhadrasan Police Station yesterday morning, within 24 hours of the chief election commissioner (CEC) talking about filing of a case against Nixon.

On October 10, a

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US adds fresh vigour to ties with Dhaka

Deputy Secretary of State Biegun's visit opens doors for greater cooperation

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Amid rising security concerns in Asia-Pacific region, the US is showing new enthusiasm for its ties with Bangladesh due to the country's sustained growth and political stability over the last decade and its geopolitical location, officials and foreign relations analysts said.

The visit of US Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun, following a number of engagements between the two countries over the last one and a half months, is a testament to the vigorous moves by the US, they said.

Biegun came to Bangladesh from India. His visit comes at a time when the US is advancing its Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) in a new Asian reality.



Stephen Biegun

"Unfortunately, we are facing a number of challenges in the Indo-Pacific. I would not deny that there are security concerns, a fact that concerns many of us, the Pacific or the Indo-Pacific nations," said Biegun.

He specifically mentioned the Indo-China tension over the Line of Actual Control in Galwan Valley, tension in Taiwan, repression in Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Tibet, and increasing economic hostility towards the people of Australia.

"There are a number of challenges and tensions in the region that have alarmed the US and other countries in the Indo-Pacific," he said at a press conference at Hotel Westin in the afternoon.

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Extend help in Rohingya repatriation

PM urges int'l community, US

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday renewed her call to the international community, including the United States, to help Bangladesh rehabilitate Rohingyas in their homeland Myanmar.

Putting emphasis on immediate repatriation of the Rohingyas, she said Myanmar should take their citizens back.

The premier said this when visiting US Deputy Secretary of State Stephen E Biegun paid a courtesy call on her at the Gono Bhaban.

PM's Press Secretary

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PHOTO ON PAGE 2

Govt to start rapid testing in 36 districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is set to launch antigen-based Covid-19 rapid testing in 36 districts which don't have RT-PCR testing facilities, officials of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said.

For this, the DGHS has procured about 2 lakh rapid testing kits from two companies -- Abbott GmbH & Co of Germany and SD Biosensor of South Korea.

Speaking to The Daily Star on Tuesday, DGHS Director General Prof ABM Khurshid Alam said, "Hopefully, we will receive the kits within a few days and we will start rapid antigen testing in at least 36 districts this week."

Dr Habibur Rahman, spokesperson for the DGHS, said the use of antigen kits would be started soon. He, however, couldn't give any specific date.

Officials said both the kits are WHO prequalified and they have also met the standard set by the DGHS.

They could not confirm the cost of each antigen test.

Each antigen kit developed by SD Biosensor will cost

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Death penalty for rapists not the answer

Says UN rights chief

AFP, Geneva

Sentencing rapists to death, as Bangladesh did yesterday, is not an appropriate punishment even for such a heinous crime, the UN rights chief said.

"Tempting as it may be to impose draconian punishments on those who carry out such monstrous acts, we must not allow ourselves to commit further violations," Michelle Bachelet said in a statement.

Her comment came after a Bangladesh court sentenced five men to death yesterday for the 2012 gang-rape of a 15-year-old girl.

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UNIVERSITY ADMISSION Decision soon on whether to hold any tests

VCs to meet tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Vice-chancellors of all public universities will hold further discussions on whether this year's HSC exam results will be given no or less weight in the university admission process.

VCs will hold the discussion at the meeting of Bangladesh Bishwabidyalaya Parishad, an association of public university vice-chancellors, on October 17.

It will also hold a discussion on whether any admission tests for public universities will be held this year.

"There will be a discussion on admission exams -- how it will be held, whether it will be in-person or online -- at the meeting on Saturday," a vice-chancellor of a university in the capital said after attending a virtual meeting between the University Grants Commission and vice chancellors of public universities yesterday.

He also said that the topic of whether this year's HSC exam results will be given any weight in the university admission tests was discussed in the meeting and it was proposed that further discussions will be held at the meeting.

At the meeting, some VCs said that it would be up to each university to decide

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A mother makes sure her child stays hydrated during the hot and humid morning of yesterday. The visually impaired parents of the child was taking part in a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club to mark the White Cane Safety Day.

PHOTO:
AMRAN HOSSAIN

5 to die for gang-raping madrasa girl

Tangail court also fines them Tk 1 lakh each

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A Tangail court yesterday sentenced five people to death for gang-raping a madrasa student in 2012.

Khaleda Yasmin, judge of Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal in Tangail, passed the order and also fined the convicts Tk 1 lakh each.

The convicts are Sagar Chandra Sheel, Sujon Moni Rishi, Rajan Chandra, Sanjit Chandra Moni Rishi and Gopi Chandra Sheel of Charalajani and Golabari village in the district's Madhupur upazila.

Of the convicts, Sanjit and Gopi were in the dock during the pronouncement of the verdict. The other three have been on the run since they obtained bail in the case from higher court.

AKM Nasimul Akter, public prosecutor (PP) of Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal in Tangail, told The Daily Star that the verdict was given under Section 9(3)/30 of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

As the allegations were proved by the witnesses and evidence, the court gave capital punishment to the all five accused, he said.

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TAKE MEASURES TO PREVENT RAPE: PM -- PAGE 2