

No COVID CERTIFICATE

304 passengers sent to quarantine from Dhaka airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 304 incoming passengers were sent to institutional quarantine in the last 24 hours -- since Saturday morning -- as they did not have Covid-19 negative certificates with them.

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh in a circular on December 4 announced that anyone wanting to come to Bangladesh after December 5 will need to have Covid-19 negative certificate, with the test done within 72 hours prior to their flight.

CAAB came up with the strict measure to contain the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic.

The regulatory authority also asked all airlines operating to and from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport not to issue boarding passes to passengers if they do not have Covid-19 negative certificates.

Recently the rate of incoming passengers without such certificates has increased. In November alone, more than 4,000 passengers arrived without certificate.

Talking to this correspondent, Dr Abu

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SEWING THE COLOURS OF VICTORY... A tailor in Gulistan is busy sewing flags as the month of December is upon us. With December 16 approaching, there's a heavy demand for flags as people are eager to express the spirit of patriotism marking 49 years of the country's victory in its Liberation War.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

IMPLEMENTING CHT PEACE ACCORD
Govt must play a proactive role

Speakers tell online discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an online discussion yesterday said the government has to play its proactive role to fully implement the Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) Accord and resolve peoples' problems there.

They said key clauses of the accord, also known as CHT peace accord, were either implemented partially or remained unimplemented despite the Awami League government, which signed it in 1997, being in power for most part of the time since the signing.

CHT Commission, CHT Citizens' Committee, and Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) jointly organised the discussion on "Twenty-three Years of Hill Tracts Accord: Present Situation in Chattogram Hill Tracts".

Singing of the accord between the government and regional political party Parbatya Chattogram Jana Sanghati Samiti brought an end to a nearly two-decade long armed conflict in the region.

Goutam Dewan, convener of CHT Citizens' Committee, said at present the region's problems have been "seen and evaluated" from a security perspective.

It should be understood that CHT region's problems were addressed politically, and initiative was also taken from the government to resolve those, he said.

"If we have to resolve it, political leadership has to do it," he added.

He said the CHT Regional Council was established for "special governance" in the region but the council has not been empowered fully.

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(Not) running in circles

Dhaka's circular bus services still suspended, months into reopening of economy

HELEMUL ALAM

The government is yet to resume circular bus services on two routes in Dhaka, citing that they are not financially viable.

State-owned Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) launched the two circular bus services -- Dhanmondi-Azimpur and Uttara-Airport Sector 12 -- last year, with a view to lessen gridlocks in parts of Dhaka and ensure better customer service and road discipline.

The Uttara short circular route was suspended a few days after its launch, while the Dhanmondi-Azimpur route remained suspended since the government enforced nationwide lockdown on March 26 to stop the spread of Covid-19.

Although the lockdown on

transport was lifted on May 30, BRTC did not resume the two circular routes due to dearth of passengers.

Another circular route -- Uttara-Gulshan -- that the BRTC also launched last year, is still serving with a small number of buses.

Since the beginning of lockdown, the bus service at Dhanmondi has remained suspended and it is still out of service, Amjad Hossain, general manager (accounts) of BRTC, told The Daily Star.

"We used to get Tk 1000 net profit from each bus in Dhanmondi route which was a very small amount. We continued the service until the beginning of the lockdown," he said, adding that the Dhanmondi circular service was launched with 20 buses on March 30 last year.

The official spokesperson of

BRTC blamed Covid-19 as the primary reason behind this stalling of the service, saying that the pandemic has greatly reduced the number of passengers.

He said the circular bus service through Uttara-Sonargaon Janapath and Airport sector-12 was suspended after a week of its launch, as big buses could not ply comfortably on the route. The route began operations on May 27 last year with 10 buses.

He said they would consider resuming operation on that route once educational institutions reopen.

Among the three routes only a handful of buses are running at areas in and around Uttara Housing Building, Airport, Staff Road, Banani and Gulshan route, said Hossain.

He said there are few buses running on the route due to low turnout of passengers.

The net profit target from each bus in this route was Tk 3,900, but currently the amount varies between Tk 1800-2000 on average.

Experts, however, said there are other reasons besides the pandemic behind the apparent failure of short-distance circular bus service in Dhanmondi and the long-distance one in Uttara.

They said the routes were reintroduced without proper study and no adequate measures were put in place to remove alternative transportation such as rickshaw and to divert buses of other routes.

Citing the privately-run Gulshan and Hatirjheel circular bus services, they said the route is successful

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FINAL EXAMS AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

UGC to sit with VCs Sunday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The University Grants Commission (UGC) will sit with the vice chancellors of all public universities next Sunday to reach a decision about the latter's demand of holding semester exams for final-year students.

Authorities of many public universities want to hold the exams to negate session jam and allow students to qualify for appearing at the upcoming BCS exams.

"We will hold a meeting with all public universities on December 13 to discuss the matter," UGC Chairman Prof Kazi Shahidullah told The Daily Star, after a monthly meeting of the commission yesterday evening.

Students, mostly those who have to sit for honours final year exams, are holding demonstrations demanding their exams be held. Students have contacted the authorities with their demands.

Universities are waiting for the decision of the UGC as it had asked universities

in June to hold online classes, exams and practical classes will take place after normalcy returns.

UGC Member Prof Muhammed Alamgir and Chairperson Kazi Shahidullah both said that public universities can decide on holding the exams after consulting with their respective academic council, dean's committee and other bodies.

Many public universities had sent letters or contacted UGC about their decision on exams especially those for honours final year and master's level students, said Alamgir.

Alamgir said that they came to know that students of several universities are holding protests with the demand of holding their exams.

Public universities are now conducting online classes as they have not been able to hold in-person classes since March 17, when the government closed all educational institutions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The closure was extended till December 19.

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RT-PCR machine at SBMC out of order

Covid-19 samples have to be sent to Dhaka labs, delaying results

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

The lone RT-PCR machine of Barishal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College has remained out of order for five days, suspending coronavirus test at the medical institution.

Consequently, Covid-19 samples collected have to be sent to Dhaka for tests, causing a delay for service seekers to receive the results, sources said.

"Generally it takes one day and now people have to wait up to seven days for the result," said SBMC RT-PCR Lab Head and Associate Professor of Virology Department Dr Md Akbar Kabir

He said the machine has been out of order since 94 samples were tested at the PCR lab on December 3.

He said the matter was reported to the higher authorities concerned in Dhaka and they sent experts to inspect the situation. On Saturday, the engineers concerned reached Barishal and took away the equipment, he said.

Dr Kabir said the thermal block of the PCR machine has not been working since December 3 and it needs to be replaced.

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RAPE OF 5-YR-OLD IN DINAJPUR IN 2016
Finish trial, submit report by Mar 31 next year: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the Nari O Shishu Nirjatan Daman Tribunal of Dinajpur to finish trial proceedings of the case filed for the abduction and rape of a five-year-old in the district in 2016 and submit a compliance report to this court by March 31 next year.

Issuing a voluntary order, the HC asked the local police to produce witnesses of the case to the tribunal on the dates scheduled for hearing.

The bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman ordered the Dinajpur tribunal to prosecute the public prosecutor concerned of the case if he does not play a proper role to finish the trial.

The HC also ordered the officials concerned of the district to take necessary steps to ensure proper treatment of the child at government cost. The bench came up with the directives on a suo-moto move following an article published by rights organisation "Amrao Pari (We Can)" on an online portal -- Women Chapter -- on November 22, describing the miserable conditions of the child and her family.

Panel lawyer of the rights body Ataulah Nurul Kabir Nayan placed the article before the HC bench yesterday for necessary orders on the issue.

On October 18, 2016, the child was abducted, raped and tortured. Her father filed a case with Parbatipur Police Station on October 20, 2016. According to the case statement, the prime accused Saiful Islam and his accomplices left her in an unconscious state on a turmeric field after raping her overnight. She was stabbed with sharp objects and had cigarette burns in several places of her body.

The child is still very sick as she has been suffering from urine infection, the lawyer said. Accused Saiful Islam is now in jail while another accused Md Afzal Hossain is out on bail, he added.



The area outside Dhaka Medical College's outdoor gate, the one right beside the Shaheed Minar, has become a hotspot for regulation violation, of all kinds. On one hand, it's always home to gatherings of hundreds of people, in complete disagreement with Covid-19 health guidelines. Then there's the occupation of footpaths, selling of unhygienic food, illegal parking -- the list goes on, and the authorities concerned seem to notice none of it. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Coupled with the winter mist, Dhaka's air is also thick with smog this winter. The air quality of the capital remained very unhealthy yesterday, as evident from the lack of visibility at 3:30pm on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

GRENADE ATTACK CASE
SC denies bail to ex-DIG, ex-DMP deputy commissioner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday denied bail to two convicts -- former deputy inspector general of police Khan Sayeed Hasan and former deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Obaidur Rahman Khan -- in the August 21 grenade attack cases.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain dismissed a petition filed by the two.

They were sentenced to two years' imprisonment and fined Tk 50,000 each by the trial court and sent to jail on January 28 last year after they surrendered to a lower court in connection with the cases.

The SC's High Court Division on March 9 this

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ABRAR MURDER CASE

Submit HC order on no-confidence by Dec 22

Judge tells lawyer of 22 accused

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday asked defence lawyers for twenty-two accused in the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) student Abrar Fahad murder case, now in jail, to submit the High Court order regarding its transfer by December 22.

After hearing on the petition submitted by the defence, Judge Abu Zafar Md Kamruzzaman of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 of Dhaka passed the order.

Earlier on December 6, the defence on behalf of their clients brought a plea of no-confidence in the judge of the tribunal.

The tribunal, however, set yesterday [December 6] for hearing on the matter.

The defence lawyers for the accused submitted a petition saying that the judge recorded statements of the prosecution witnesses in accordance with the law, but did not record their statements properly while cross-examining the witnesses.

So they apprehended that they would not get justice from the tribunal, defence lawyers also stated in their petition. They will submit an application with the High

Court for transfer of the case, they added.

The prosecution opposed it, saying that the defence submitted such petition only to hamper the trial of the case.

The same tribunal on September 15 framed charges against all 25 accused in the case.

Forty out of 60 prosecution witnesses, including complainant of the case, have so far given depositions in the case.

On October 7 last year, Abrar, a second-year student of Buet, was beaten to death by a group of Buet unit Chhatra League men in a dormitory.

Abrar's father Barkatullah filed a murder case in this regard on October 7 with Chawkbazar Police Station.

The incident triggered a firestorm of protests on campuses across the country. Many took to social media to demand justice for Abrar.

Amid protest on the campus, Buet authorities on October 11 banned all political activities on the campus and suspended 19 students, mostly leaders of the university's BCL unit who were made accused in the murder case.

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