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Your Right to Know

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BANGLADESH
UPDATE

2,996

New cases in 24hrs



2,63,503

Total cases



3,471

Deaths



1,51,972

Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE

741,237

Deaths



20,358,187

Total cases

STUDY, RESEARCH ABROAD

Pandemic leaves them hanging

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

Thousands of students who got admission and scholarship at different universities abroad are in deep trouble due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

As many embassies and consulates in Bangladesh are either not taking any visa appointments at all or taking them on a limited scale, many students fear that they will lose funding opportunities and will ultimately be forced to cancel their admission.

Md Akibur Rahman, a chemical engineering graduate from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), got PhD admission offers from two US universities and a Master's admission offer from one university.

"I opted for PhD admission at Virginia Tech University. Then, on June 19, I was notified by my supervisor that if I cannot join the university this fall [September], my PhD funding would be cancelled. They would not be able to defer my funding to the next admission season because of unavailability of funds due to the Covid-19 situation," said Rahman.

"When I contacted the other two universities from where I got admission offers, I was told that they had already filled

up the seats. As the embassy has not even started to issue visa appointments yet, I cannot see any possibility of me joining the university this fall and you can say that my admission is kind of cancelled despite the fact that I got admission offers from three universities," he added.

A lecturer of a renowned public university who did not want to disclose her name, said, "I got two scholarships; one in Imperial College, London under Commonwealth Scholarship, and another in University of British Columbia [UBC] in Canada. I don't know when I will get my UK visa, whereas Imperial College, London will start its classes from the first week of September. I have been told that initially my classes will be online for a few months but my field of research is laboratory-based. So, I must join the university by January 2021.

Getting admission and scholarship offers from a reputed university, which many students in this country are about to lose due to the Covid-19 pandemic, require years of rigorous preparation and investment of hundreds of thousands of taka.

"If you calculate GRE exam fees, TOEFL or IELTS test fees, admission fees, overseas

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Relatives of deceased offer munajat after the burial of a Covid-19 patient at the Shaheed Buddhijibi Graveyard in the capital's Rayerbazar. This block-8 of the graveyard has been designated for the burial of those who die from the virus. Families burying their loved ones are often joined in prayers by other families who go there to offer munajat for their Covid-19 victims, like as seen in this photo taken yesterday. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

FIR ON SINHA'S DEATH

Questions over three witnesses

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and ZYMA ISLAM

Rab yesterday produced in court the three people named by police as witnesses in the first information report over the death of Maj (retd) Sinha Rashed Md Khan.

In the FIR filed by Sub-Inspector Nandadulal Rakhshit of Teknaf police, the witnesses -- Nurul Amin, Nizam Uddin and Md Aiyas -- had been described as the first informants of Sinha's presence in Teknaf's Baharchhara area.

Rab official Jamil Ul Haque, investigation officer of the Sinha murder case, produced the three before Teknaf Upazila Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court, showing them arrested in the case. He sought their 10-day remand.

The court sent the arrestees to jail and said it would hear the remand prayer today. Meanwhile, Lt Col Ashik Billah, director of Rab's Legal and Media Wing, said they arrested the three around 2:00pm yesterday.

However, there are some puzzles surrounding the circumstances of the arrests.

The wife of one of the arrestees -- Nizam Uddin -- filed a case with Teknaf police last night, claiming that her husband had been

abducted around 3:30pm on August 10 by some unidentifiable people who came to her house in a white Hiace microbus.

On the same day, Cox's Bazar police officials went to the houses of the three witnesses but found them all missing, said police sources.

Police had gone to their houses upon getting a letter from a high-level joint probe committee. The probe body, formed after Sinha was shot dead at a check post in Teknaf on July 31, instructed them to bring all the witnesses for interrogation, added the sources.

"We went to the houses of the witnesses and found that they had been picked up by some unidentified people...." said a police official, seeking anonymity.

On August 2, our Cox's Bazar correspondent had gone to Nurul's house but found it locked. Nurul's neighbours said the whole family had left the house and they did not know where they went. Nurul, a farmer, is involved with the community police.

Another witness, Aiyas, was also not found at home that day. Aiyas is the head of community police in Ward-7 of

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Govt may scrap PEC, JSC exams

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government is considering cancelling this year's Primary Education Completion, Junior School Certificate and equivalent exams due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The primary and mass education ministry and the education ministry are set to send proposals to the Prime Minister's Office to cancel this year's Primary Education Completion and Junior School Certificate and equivalent exams early next week, two top officials of the ministries told The Daily Star.

If Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina approves the proposal, the primary and mass education ministry will cancel this year's PEC and equivalent Ibtedayi Education Completion exam, and the education ministry will cancel JSC and the equivalent Junior Dakhil Certificate exam, they added.

The move came after Primary and Mass Education Senior Secretary Akram-Al-Hossain and Secondary And Higher Education Secretary Mahbub Hossain held a meeting with the principal secretary to the prime minister and other top officials of the PMO earlier this week.

Primary and mass education ministry is preparing the proposal regarding cancellation of PEC and equivalent exams, while the education ministry is doing the same for JSC and equivalent exams, said a secretary who attended the meeting.

PEC and its equivalent exams for fifth-graders, and JSC and its equivalent exams for eighth-graders, are the two largest public examinations and both are scheduled for November.

This year about 3 million students are expected to take

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BUSINESS

Chinese firm to invest \$300m

Oryx Biotech, a subsidiary of Oryx Biotech Holdings based in China, yesterday signed an agreement to invest \$300 million to set up a plasma fractionation plant in Bangladesh in a move that would help treat critical diseases.

This is the first biotech investment in the country. GDP growth slows to 11-year low

Rejaul Karim Byron and Md Fazlur Rahman

The economy grew 5.24 per cent in the last fiscal year, the slowest pace of expansion in 11 years, outpacing grimmer pictures painted by multilateral lenders owing to the coronavirus pandemic. Industrial production nearly halved, services fell sharply and the agriculture sector slowed in the last fiscal year.

STORY ON B1

Nearly one in 10 infected in city

Finds govt survey on 3,227 households; experts alarmed by asymptomatic cases

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

Nine percent of the Dhaka city dwellers have already been infected with coronavirus and 78 percent of them had no symptoms, according to a study.

The first-ever cross-sectional study indicates that many undetected carriers have been spreading the deadly virus, experts said.

"The study proves the number of infected people is more than what we thought. The transmission is going on extensively in an unknown and uncontrolled way," Prof Ridwanur Rahman, an infectious disease specialist, told The Daily Star yesterday.

A total of 3,227 households were surveyed across the capital between April 18 and July 5, jointly by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) and the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b).

Of the households, five percent had one or more family members who had Covid-19 symptoms.

In these households, 211 individuals were found symptomatic and of them, 199 were tested with RT-PCR tests. Of them, 30 percent were tested positive for Covid-19.

Meantime, 201 individuals from these symptomatic households were selected for RT-PCR tests and 14 percent of them tested positive.

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Stop assault on freedom of expression, assembly

Amnesty International urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amnesty International has urged the Bangladesh government to immediately stop all attacks on those peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and urgently investigate a series of recent attacks.

The global rights body made the call in the wake of recent attacks, including the enforced disappearance of a student activist, it said in a press release yesterday.

Referring to Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights, the release said between 2009 and 2018, at least 507 people were subjected to enforced disappearances.

Of them, 62 people were found dead, 286 returned alive, and the fate and whereabouts of 159 are still unknown.

"Enforced disappearances have been

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Three men bind bundles of waterlilies on boats at Shapla Beel in Munshiganj's Sirajdikhan upazila yesterday. They would sell the flowers, consumed as vegetables, to a wholesaler, not in picture, for Tk 8 a bundle.

PHOTO:
AMRAN HOSSAIN

Russia claims 1st Covid-19 vaccine

Putin's daughter inoculated; WHO says it's discussing possible prequalification of the vaccine

REUTERS, Moscow

President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that Russia had become the first country in the world to grant regulatory approval to a Covid-19 vaccine after less than two months of human testing, a move hailed by Moscow as evidence of its scientific prowess.

The vaccine still has to complete final trials, raising concerns among some experts at the speed of its approval, but the Russian business conglomerate Sistema has said it expects to put it into mass production by the end of the year.

Russian health workers treating Covid-19 patients will be offered the chance of volunteering to be vaccinated in the coming weeks, a source told Reuters last month.

Regulatory approval paves the way for the mass inoculation of the Russian population and authorities hope it will allow the economy, which has been battered by fallout from the virus, to return to full capacity.

Kirill Dmitriev, head of Russia's sovereign wealth fund, hailed the development as a historic "Sputnik moment", comparable to the Soviet Union's 1957 launch of Sputnik 1, the world's first satellite.

The vaccine will be marketed under the name 'Sputnik V' on foreign markets, he said.

Dmitriev said Russia had already received foreign requests for 1 billion doses. International agreements had been secured to produce 500 million doses annually, with the vaccine also expected to be produced in Brazil.

He said clinical trials were expected to start soon in the United Arab Emirates and the Philippines.

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