

Covid source not found

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quarantine.

Liang said studies showed the virus could be "carried long-distance on cold chain products", appearing to nudge towards the theory the virus was imported -- an idea that has abounded in China in recent months.

Ben Embarek said "the virus can persist and survive in conditions that are found in these cold and frozen environments".

"But we don't really understand if the virus can then transmit to humans and under which conditions this could happen," he said.

Beijing is desperate to defang criticism of its handling of the chaotic early stages of the outbreak.

It has tried to refocus attention on its handling and recovery while floating the theory that the virus emerged abroad and was brought into China possibly via frozen foods.

Koopmans said the next steps could include searching for "earlier circulation" of the virus.

Reporters were largely kept at arms' length from the experts during their closely-monitored visit, but snippets of their findings crept out via Twitter and interviews.

Questions have been asked about the relevance of some of their activities to their stated aim of finding the virus source -- including a visit to a propaganda exhibition celebrating China's recovery from the pandemic.

The group spent just an hour at the seafood market where many of the first reported clusters of infections emerged over a year ago, reports AFP.

They also appeared to spend several days inside their hotel, receiving visits from various Chinese officials without venturing out into the city.

Research was carried out at the Wuhan virology institute where they spent nearly four hours. They met with Chinese scientists there including Shi Zhengli, one of China's leading experts on bat coronaviruses and a deputy director of the Wuhan lab.

ASTRAZENECA SHOT

Iran began its vaccination campaign against Covid-19 yesterday to fight the Middle East's deadliest outbreak of the illness.

It will initially use Russia's Sputnik V shots, with 4.2 million doses of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccines also expected under the Covax mechanism, which intends to ensure procurement and equitable international distribution of jabs.

The AstraZeneca vaccine makes up the bulk of initial Covax deliveries to some 145 countries -- mostly in poorer parts of the world -- but it suffered a setback in recent days with a trial showing it only offers minimal protection against the coronavirus variant first detected in South Africa.

The results forced South Africa to delay the start of its vaccination campaign, but the WHO insisted Monday that the AstraZeneca shot remained vital to the global fight against Covid-19.

Richard Hatchett, head of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), said it was "vastly too early to be dismissing this vaccine".

"It is absolutely crucial to use the tools that we have as effectively as we possibly can," he said at a WHO press briefing.

AstraZeneca has stood by its vaccine, and said researchers are working on an updated version that can be effective against the new variants. WHO authorisation for the shot is expected next week.

India said yesterday it had no concerns over the efficacy of the AstraZeneca vaccine despite South Africa putting it on hold, and ordered 10 million more doses of the shot for its own huge immunisation campaign, reports Reuters.

"Our vaccination programme is robust and valid, and I assure you that we are going ahead with it, not worried at the moment," Vinod Kumar Paul, a top Indian vaccine official, told a news conference.



Demonstrators riot against police as they protest against the military coup and demand the release of elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi, in Mandalay, Myanmar yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Police fire to disperse crowd

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Neither police nor the hospital responded to a request for comment.

A man had a chest wound but was not in critical condition. It was not clear if he was hit with a bullet or rubber bullet, the doctor said.

The United Nations yesterday condemned the use of force against anti-coup protesters, reports AFP.

"The use of disproportionate force against demonstrators is unacceptable," Ola Almgren, the UN resident coordinator and humanitarian coordinator in Myanmar, said in a statement.

Myanmar's state television reported injuries to police during attempts to disperse protesters it said were acting aggressively, in its first acknowledgement of demonstrations taking place in the country.

Protesters have taken to the streets in cities and towns in the largest demonstrations in Myanmar for more than a decade against a February 1 military coup that ousted the elected government of veteran democracy campaigner, Aung San Suu Kyi.

The unrest has revived memories of almost half a century of direct army rule, and spasms of bloody protests against it, until the military began a process of withdrawing from civilian politics in 2011.

Suu Kyi's party won a 2015 election but the transition to democracy was brought to a halt by the February 1 coup that ousted her government as it was preparing to begin its second term after her National League for

Democracy (NLD) swept a November 8 election.

The military cited election fraud as justification for its takeover. The electoral commission dismissed accusations of fraud.

Earlier, witnesses said police fired guns into the air in Naypyitaw as a crowd refused to disperse. Police then fired water cannon at the protesters, who responded with stones, the witness said.

Video footage posted on social media apparently of the woman who was killed, showed her with some other protesters by what appeared to be a bus-stop shelter some distance from a row of riot police as a water cannon sprayed and several shots could be heard.

The woman, wearing a motorbike helmet, suddenly collapsed. Pictures on social media of her helmet showed what appeared to be a bullet hole.

Reuters was not able to verify the video footage or photographs.

PROMISE OF DEMOCRACY
Earlier, video from the central town of Bago showed police confronting a crowd and blasting them with jets from water cannon.

Police arrested at least 27 demonstrators in the second-biggest city of Mandalay, domestic media reported.

Promises on Monday from junta leader General Min Aung Hlaing to eventually hold a new election in his first address since seizing power drew scorn. He repeated unproven accusations of fraud in the election.

Min Aung Hlaing said the junta would form a "true and disciplined democracy", different to previous eras of military rule, which brought years of isolation and poverty.

Orders banning gatherings of more than four people and a curfew from 8:00 pm to 4:00 am have been imposed on Yangon and Mandalay. A growing civil disobedience movement affecting hospitals, schools and government offices shows no sign of ending but the crowds in Yangon appeared smaller yesterday than the previous day.

"The main thing is we don't want a coup," said a 24-year-old woman protester in Yangon. "If we young people don't come out who will?"

Western governments have widely condemned the coup, although there has been little concrete action to press the generals.

The Philippines yesterday issued a second statement on Myanmar, calling for "complete restoration of the status quo" - one of the few among Myanmar's Southeast Asian neighbours to comment on the military intervention.

New Zealand has suspended all high-level political and military contact and will ensure aid does not benefit the military and impose a travel ban on its leaders.

The UN Security Council has called for the release of Suu Kyi and others. The UN Human Rights Council will hold a special session on Friday to discuss the crisis.

Maldives to recruit

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for the acts of genocide committed against the Rohingya people," he said.

RECOGNITION

Abdulla also recognised with gratitude Bangladesh's significant contributions to a variety of fields, including training and scholarship, health and medicine, defence and other technical areas.

"Bangladesh is a prepared destination of our medical interns. Bangladesh is always steadfast partner and most recently proved its generosity towards the Maldives with assistance extended to the government of [the] Maldives in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic on multiple fronts," he said.

About the manpower recruitment, the Bangladesh foreign minister said the Maldives will recruit some nurses from Bangladesh. Some Bangladesh physicians have already started working there, he added.

The president of the Maldives has already declared that all the workers, including foreigners, will get free vaccination in his country. "We'll send some nurses to help carry out vaccination in the Maldives, particularly for the large Bangladeshi community staying there," he said.

Some 80,000 Bangladeshi expatriates are currently working in the Maldives.

PRESIDENT'S VISIT

Momen said Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih will visit Dhaka to attend Mujib Borsho functions and Bangladesh's Independence Day.

He said during the meeting, they discussed a whole range of issues, including extension of trade and business, enhancing connectivity, particularly shipping and climate ones.

He added that they also talked about national, regional and international matters.

"We had good discussions in cordial atmosphere. We've agreed on many issues. Hope, we'll have better days," said Momen.

The foreign minister of the Maldives arrived here on Monday on an official visit to Bangladesh at the invitation of his Bangladeshi counterpart Momen.

Drug trader

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Seeing the BGB members, the duo opened fire, forcing the border troops to fire back. One of the criminals fell in the river as he was hit by bullets, but the other managed to flee, the official said.

Inspector (investigation) Abdul Alim of Teknaf Model Police Station said they recovered the body in the morning. The body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital, he added.

India should probe abuses

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"The government's failure to hold security personnel accountable has led to further abuses and the harassment of very poor and vulnerable populations," she said.

The Indian government has issued public orders to exercise restraint and end unlawful killings, and made assurances to Bangladesh, including during talks in December 2020.

However, the Bangladeshi group Odhikar alleged that the border forces have killed at least 334 Bangladeshis since 2011 and committed other instances of severe abuse, including 51 killings in 2020, said the release.

Indian border guards, deployed to prevent cattle rustling, smuggling, and illegal crossings, say they use force only when they come under attack, it added.

The Indian government should comply with the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, said the HRW.

Given the failure of the BSF's internal justice system to prosecute its members for human rights abuses, civilian

authorities should investigate personnel of all ranks implicated in serious rights abuses and try them in civilian courts, said the rights body.

"The Indian government should demonstrate its promised zero tolerance for abuses at the Bangladesh border by ending the culture of impunity for its border soldiers," Ganguly said.

Bangladesh has repeatedly protested abuses at the border.

HRW knows of no cases in which Indian authorities have held BSF soldiers accountable for abuses committed along the India-Bangladesh border.

Some border guards are reportedly also involved in facilitating cattle smuggling or human trafficking, and target people who resist extortion attempts, the rights body added.

The HRW release further said Banglar Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha, an Indian organisation that has investigated at least 105 alleged killings by BSF in the border areas in West Bengal state since 2011, mentioned that the actual number of killings is most likely higher.

Ruling party men clash

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sustained stab injuries during the clash while discharging duties in plainclothes. Beside, GTV camera person Raju Ahmed was also wounded during the clash.

Seven injured, including the constable and camera person, were admitted to Bogura Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital, said Abdul Wadud, deputy director at the hospital.

According to witnesses and police, 10 motorcycles, three buses and a petrol pump were vandalised during the clash. Three of the motorbikes were torched.

Movement of traffic on Dhaka-Rangpur highway was halted for about two hours from 11:30am.

Contacted, Monjurul, also a former

convener of Bogura District Motor Malik Group, said he went near the bus terminal, but Aminul and his supporters announced through loudspeakers that they would not allow him to enter the terminal.

"After sometime, when I along with my people was returning from Charmatha area, police suddenly opened fired on my people, leaving at least 20 of them hit with bullets. They are now receiving treatment at different hospitals," he told The Daily Star.

He alleged that Aminul's men vandalised three of his buses in the terminal area.

Despite repeated attempts, this reporter could not reach Aminul over the phone for comments.

Israel, Greece sign travel deal for vaccinated citizens

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel and Greece agreed a tourism deal Monday that will allow coronavirus-vaccinated citizens of the two countries to travel between them without limitations, once flights resume.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said the agreement "will allow us... to be able to offer Israeli tourists the opportunity to spend their holidays in Greece without any restrictions" at a joint press conference with his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu.

This would go into effect once "a significant percentage of the population is vaccinated" and travel restrictions are lifted, Mitsotakis said.

"I hope to be able to welcome Israeli tourists as soon as possible to Greece."

Israel has vaccinated more than 3.5 million of its nine million-strong population -- of which more than two million have received two doses -- since mid-December, in what is widely described as the world's fastest vaccination campaign per capita.

Greece had carried out fewer than

360,000 vaccinations in the country of 11 million as of the end of last week and restrictions relaxed over Christmas were reimposed on Friday as part of an ongoing lockdown, amid an upsurge in infections in recent weeks.

Netanyahu said the two premiers discussed a "green passport" vaccine certificate arrangement that will allow Israeli tourists "to go to Greece without any limitations. No self-isolation. Nothing", when flight restrictions are lifted.

Israeli Tourism Minister Orit Farkash-Hacohen, who signed the agreement with her Greek counterpart, called on tourists from Greece to visit Israel.

"I want to take this opportunity to encourage Greek people, and everyone else: make Israel your post-Covid destination," she said.

Israel on Sunday began easing its third coronavirus lockdown imposed since December, when the country saw a rise in Covid-19 infections, though it did not lift restrictions on international flights, which remain suspended until February 20.

Customs finds

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being smuggled through the US-Bangla aircraft. The official carried out their drive before the staff could transfer the gold bars out of the airport.

The gold bars are worth around Tk 4.75 crore.

Two separate cases have been filed with the Airport Police Station against the staffers, while handing them over.

Talking to The Daily Star, Kamrul Islam, general manager, Public Relations of US-Bangla Airlines, said the law will take its own course regarding those arrested in this connection.

"US-Bangla Airlines will provide all kinds of assistance to the law enforcement agencies," he said.

Don't collect

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the country. Of those, 84 having 4.5 lakh students are now running academic activities.

Contacted, Attorney General AM Amin Uddin said the government is not currently demanding any income tax from the private universities.

Senior counsels M Amir-Ul Islam, AF Hasan Ariff, Rokanuddin Mahmud, Fida M Kamal and Prabir Neogi argued in favour of the private universities at the virtual hearing on the leave-to-appeal petitions.

Following 44 separate writ petitions filed by nearly two dozen private universities, the HC on September 5, 2016, declared illegal the government orders that imposed 15 percent income tax on the private educational institutions and asked the NBR to refund the money collected from the institutions from 2007.

The HC also scrapped the three statutory regulatory orders for tax imposition issued by the government in 2007 and 2010 which imposed 15 percent income tax on private universities and private medical, dental and engineering colleges.

Following a government petition, the chamber judge of the SC on September 7, 2016, stayed part of the HC verdict that scrapped the government orders imposing 15 percent income tax on private institutions.

The chamber judge also stayed the HC directive asking the NBR to refund the money collected as income tax from the institutions from 2007.

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শেখ হাসিনার মুক্তি
গ্রাম শহরের উন্নতি

No: 46.018.0000.003.04.04.19.173 Date: 09/02/2021

Tender Notice

01.	Ministry/ Division	:	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives; Local Government Division.		
02.	Agency	:	National Institute of Local Government (NILG).		
03.	Procuring Entity Name	:	Md. Borhan Uddin Bhuiyan; Project Director.		
04.	Procuring Entity District	:	Dhaka		
05.	Invitation for	:	Tender for Goods procurement under Single Lot.		
06.	Invitation Ref no	:	46.018.0000.003.04.04.19.173		
07.	Date	:	09 th February, 2021		
08.	Procurement Method	:	NCT, Open Tender		
09.	Budget and Source of Funds	:	Development Budget; Aid Grant.		
10.	Development Partner	:	Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation (SDC)		
11.	Project Code	:	009436		
12.	Project Name	:	Institutionalization of Horizontal Learning Program (HLP) in Bangladesh		
13.	Tender Package No	:	GD-1		
14.	Tender Package Name	:	Computer & Accessories Procurement		
15.	Tender Publication Date	:	10/02/2021		
16.	Tender Last Selling Date	:	02/03/2021 up to 17.00 hrs. (during office hours)		
17.	Tender Closing Date & Time:	:	03/03/2021 at 12.00 pm		
18.	Tender Opening Date & Time	:	03/03/2021 at 12.30 pm		
19.	Selling Tender Document	:	HLP Project Office, 1 st Floor, 29 Agargaon, Sher e Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207		
20.	Receiving Tender Document:	:	HLP Project Office, 1 st Floor, 29 Agargaon, Sher e Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207		
21.	Opening Tender Document	:	HLP Meeting Room, 1 st Floor, 29 Agargaon, Sher e Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207		
22.	Eligibility of Tenderer	:	As per Tender Documents (TDS)		
23.	Brief Description of Goods	:	Supply of any international reputed brand Desktop Computers -09, Laptop Computer-05, Digital Media Storage-05, Printer-03, Scanner-05. (as per technical specification)		
24.	Tender document Price	:	500/- (Five Hundred only)		
25.	Lot No.	Identification of Lot	Location	Tender Security Amount in Taka	Completion Time in months
	01	46.018.0000.003.04.04.19.173	HLP Project Office, 1 st Floor, 29 Agargaon, Sher e Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207	40,000/- (Forty Thousand only)	01 month
26.	Name of Official Inviting Tender	:	Md. Borhan Uddin Bhuiyan		
27.	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	:	Project Director		
28.	Address of Official Inviting Tender	:	Institutionalization of Horizontal Learning Program (HLP) in Bangladesh", NILG, 29 Agargaon, Sher e Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207		
29.	Contact Details of Official Inviting Tender:	:	01711578796, 55006978 (Office)		
30.	The Procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders.				

09.02.21
 Md. Borhan Uddin Bhuiyan
 Project Director
 Institutionalization of Horizontal Learning Program (HLP) in Bangladesh

GD-276