

Cases, deaths drop globally

Says WHO as Covid-19 vaccination drive gathers pace

AGENCIES

The number of new cases of Covid-19 reported worldwide fell by 16 percent last week to 2.7 million, the World Health Organization said.

The number of new deaths reported also fell 10 percent week-on-week, to 81,000, the WHO said late Tuesday in its weekly epidemiological update, using figures up to Sunday.

Five of the six WHO regions of the world reported a double-digit percentage decline in new cases, with only the Eastern Mediterranean showing a rise, of seven percent.

New case numbers dropped 20 percent last week in Africa and in the Western Pacific, 18 percent in Europe, 16 percent in the Americas and 13 percent in southeast Asia.

WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Monday that the number of new cases had declined for a fifth consecutive week, dropping by almost half, from more than five million cases in the week of January 4.

"This shows that simple public health measures work, even in the presence of variants," Tedros said.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres yesterday called for a global plan to vaccinate against Covid-19, warning that inequities in initial efforts risked both the world's health and economy.

Meanwhile the Covax facility, the global Covid-19 vaccine procurement and distribution effort which aims to ensure poorer countries are also able to access doses, said its final shipment list for the first deliveries would be issued next week, following the WHO giving the green light to the AstraZeneca jabs.

Meanwhile, the EU yesterday said it will launch a programme to study Covid-19 variants and produce "second generation" vaccines against future strains, the bloc's president has said.

The "HERA incubator" programme, which began yesterday, will bring together the pharmaceutical industry, laboratories, health

authorities and researchers, Ursula von der Leyen said.

Japan, meanwhile, launched its vaccination programme yesterday, five months ahead of the Tokyo Olympics, as Australia and New Zealand ended snap lockdowns after they successfully brought small outbreaks under control in just days.

With infections topping 109 million and more than 2.4 million deaths, the pandemic has devastated the global economy, and populations are growing increasingly frustrated with financially painful restrictions that authorities and experts say are necessary to fight the virus.

South Africa launched its vaccination programme using a Johnson & Johnson vaccine, after a delayed start caused by concerns about the ability of the Oxford-AstraZeneca formula to shield against a widespread variant of the virus.

Gaza received its first shipment of Covid-19 vaccines yesterday after Israel approved the transfer through its border with the Hamas Islamist-run territory, Israeli and Palestinian officials said.

COVID PANDEMIC

New case numbers dropped 13pc in southeast Asia

UN chief calls for global vaccination plan

EU to launch programme for 'second generation' vaccines

Australia, NZ end snap lockdowns



Protesters block a major road during a demonstration against the military coup in Yangon, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Fears of violence grow

Anti-coup protesters in Myanmar stage biggest rallies as UN envoy fears bloodshed; internet remains cut for third night

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's anti-coup protesters returned to the streets in force yesterday, staging the biggest demonstrations since troops fanned out around the country to quell opposition to the new military junta.

Much of the country has been in open revolt since the military deposed Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's government at the start of the month and charged her under an obscure import law.

UN special rapporteur Tom Andrews warned that soldiers going into Yangon, as had been reported, could lead to the situation there spiralling out of control.

"We could be on the precipice of the military committing even greater crimes against the people of Myanmar," he said.

Tens of thousands rallied in Yangon, some blockading roads with vehicles to stop security forces from moving around the nation's biggest city.

Police and soldiers were spotted near a key protest junction but appeared to be hanging back, looking on as demonstrators streamed past.

Yesterday's crowds came in defiance of violent efforts by the regime to bring resistance to heel -- including use of tear gas and rubber bullets -- following nationwide street protests and a disobedience campaign encouraging civil servants to strike.

Demonstrations over the past two days had been noticeably smaller since troops were deployed around Yangon at the weekend.

But social media platforms had been flooded with calls for a show of force by protesters in the hours before the junta imposed a third consecutive overnight internet blackout.

By noon, there were anti-coup demonstrations across Myanmar, from the remote highland region of Chin state to a small town in the Irrawaddy delta where

parading protesters hoisted Suu Kyi posters.

After her detention in a dawn raid on February 1, Suu Kyi was charged with possessing unregistered walkie-talkies found in her home.

Her lawyer Khin Maung Zaw told AFP on Tuesday she was also charged with violating the country's disaster management law. Further details of that charge have not been made public.

The disaster management law has also been used against deposed president Win Myint for an election campaign event that the junta claims broke coronavirus restrictions.

Her lawyer added that Suu Kyi and Win Myint, both of whom he has yet to have any contact with, were expected to appear via video link during a March 1 trial.

More than 450 people have been arrested since the coup, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners monitoring group.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Millions without power as deadly cold snap grips US

Millions were left without power as a winter storm gripped the southern and central United States with record-low temperatures in ill-prepared areas, and a tornado claiming three lives. More than 20 storm-related deaths have been registered so far till Tuesday, including in traffic accidents in Texas, Kentucky and Missouri. Weather-related emergencies have been declared in Texas, Alabama, Oklahoma, Kansas, Mississippi and Oregon.

Gunmen kidnap 42 in Nigeria

Gunmen have abducted 42 people, including 27 students, from a school in central Nigeria, a local government official said yesterday, downplaying initial reports that hundreds had been taken. One student was killed, he added. President Muhammadu Buhari, in a statement earlier, condemned the abductions and ordered a rescue operation. Heavily-armed gangs known locally as "bandits" active in northwest and central Nigeria have stepped up attacks in recent years, kidnapping for ransom, raping and pillaging.

Trump urges Senate GOP to dump Mitch McConnell

Donald Trump urged Republican senators Tuesday to dump Mitch McConnell as their leader in the Senate following his withering criticism of the former US president after his impeachment trial. In his most extensive comments yet on politics since stepping down from power on January 20, Trump also threatened to use his influence against party candidates who don't align with him. He called the longtime senator "dour, sullen" and warned that "if Republican Senators are going to stay with him, they will not win again."

\$59 million Hong Kong flat sale sets new Asia record

Hong Kong may be in its worst recession in years but its luxury property market is still thriving after a five-bedroom apartment broke records with its \$59 million price tag. While there have been more expensive properties sold in Hong Kong, the 3,378-square-foot penthouse in the affluent Mid-Levels neighbourhood set a new benchmark for price per square foot at \$17,500. The HK\$459.4 million sale, reported by local media yesterday and recorded in the development's register of transactions, illustrates the stark inequality in Hong Kong. The price paid by the unidentified buyer for the property at 21 Borrett Road -- a newly built luxury apartment tower -- beat the previous price per square foot record set in 2017. A 2019 report by real estate firm CBRE ranked Hong Kong as the most expensive city for residential property, with an average price of \$2,091 per square foot. It listed the average property price in Hong Kong as \$1.2 million -- far above second-placed Singapore at \$874,372.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS, ANN

Make sure it's taken down

FROM PAGE 1

take down the content that could malign the prestige and dignity of an elected democratic government.

"In such a view of the matter, this court, exercising extraordinary jurisdiction, thus directs respondent no-5 to prevent further worsening of the situation by streaming through those social media -- Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter -- of that documentary both nationally and internationally."

The writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Anamul Kabir Emon sought a ban on the broadcast of Al Jazeera in Bangladesh and the removal of "Al the Prime Minister's Men" from the internet.

The bench yesterday heard arguments from Attorney General AM Amin Uddin and BTRC's lawyer Khandaker Reza-E-Raquib.

Amin told the HC that "Al the Prime Minister's Men" scandalised the whole state by calling Bangladesh a mafia state.

In such a situation any citizen has locus standi to move a writ petition, seeking remedy, the attorney general said and cited previous decisions of the SC in support of his argument.

The writ petitioner has filed this petition as a public interest litigation, he added.

When one of the judges asked him whether he supported the writ petition, he said he did not think Al Jazeera should be blocked, but he believed its report "All the Prime Minister's Men" should be removed from digital platforms.

The report made the people's heart bleed and therefore, every citizen

has the right to seek remedy, he said, adding that the writ petition was acceptable.

The attorney general also said the contents and links of the Al Jazeera report should be removed from social media and all digital platforms.

BTRC lawyer Khandaker-Reza-E-Raquib told the court that each and every organ of the state wanted the content removed.

If five crore people have already watched the report, 100 crore more will see it if it is not removed now, the lawyer said, "The Al Jazeera report is constantly hurting us."

On Monday, five of six amici curiae (friends of court) told the HC bench that the writ petition was not acceptable.

Since there is no allegation of violation of fundamental rights because of the Al Jazeera report, the writ petitioner has no logical reason to be aggrieved and move the petition, they said.

The petitioner has not served any legal notice to the government demanding steps to this effect and a decision to block or restrict Al Jazeera may tarnish freedom of speech and freedom of press in Bangladesh. Besides, the laws of the land are not enforceable to restrict freedom of speech outside the country, according to their opinions.

The amici curiae placed at the HC the legal and constitutional interpretations and examples of decisions of courts from home and abroad and the possible consequences of banning the broadcast of Al Jazeera in Bangladesh.

The five experts are: former

attorneys general AJ Mohammad Ali and Fida M Kamal, and senior lawyers Kamal Ul Alam, Probrir Neogi and Shahdeen Malik.

The other expert Abdul Matin Khasru did not clearly state his opinion on the acceptability of the writ petition, but said the HC could order the government over the issue if it felt necessary because the documentary was an attack on the prime minister, the army, and the integrity and solidarity of the country.

Lawyer Anamul Kabir Emon submitted the writ petition as a public interest litigation to the HC on February 9, saying that the Al Jazeera documentary has damaged the image of Bangladesh at home and abroad and hurt the sovereignty of Bangladesh. Contents of the report are not authentic, he said, adding that Al Jazeera had earlier broadcast reports damaging the image of Bangladesh but no action was taken against the people involved.

However, speaking on the issue, BTRC Chairman Shyam Sunder Sikder yesterday said they had earlier requested YouTube and Facebook to remove the Al Jazeera report.

In response, YouTube authorities said that they could not remove the content because it did not violate their Community Guidelines, the BTRC chairman said.

Facebook authorities also said the same, he added. "Now, it will be easier for us to approach YouTube and Facebook again after the High Court directive."

Full text of the HC order was not released yesterday.

Four sued for sedition

FROM PAGE 1

general of Al Jazeera Media Network.

Moshiur Malek, founder and president of Bangabandhu Foundation, filed the case with the court of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Ashke Imam, Atiqur Rahman, bench assistant of the court, told The Daily Star.

After holding hearing, the magistrate recorded the statement of the complainant and took cognisance of the case.

The magistrate will pass an order in the case on February 22, court sources said.

In the complaint, Malek said Al Jazeera on February 1 aired a report which was also published on YouTube and online newspapers.

The report was fictitious, false, fake and fabricated. By broadcasting the report, Al Jazeera tarnished the image of the government and the state at home and abroad which is tantamount

to sedition, the complainant added.

In his statement to the court, Malek said the accused were conspiring to "topple" the country's elected government through this report.

He appealed to the court to issue arrest warrants against the accused through Interpol for their alleged involvement in the offences.

The Al Jazeera report caused a stir in the country and received a major backlash from the government.

Earlier in May last year, Tasneem Khalil and Zulkarnain were sued for objectionable posts on social media against the state, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and several important persons of the country.

They were also charged with "tarnishing the image of the nation".

On February 4 this year, Sub-Inspector Md Mohsin Sardar of Ramna Police Station, also the investigation

officer of the case, dropped their names from the probe report as he did not find enough evidence against them.

The IO included the names of cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore, writer Mushtaq Ahmed and Rashtrachinta activist Didarul Islam Bhuiyan in the charge sheet of the case.

But on February 10, Judge Mohammad Ash Sams Joglul Hossain of the Dhaka Cyber Tribunal ordered further investigation into the case filed under the Digital Security Act against eleven people, including Tasneem Khalil and Zulkarnain, after the prosecution submitted a petition, seeking further probe.

The tribunal also ordered the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of police to further investigate all the 11 accused and submit the probe report to it by March 23.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh			
College Education Development Project (CEDP)			
Govt. Suhrawardi College, Pirojpur			
E-mail: gscpirojpur@gmail.com, Phone No. 0461-62650			
Invitation for Tenders			
Issue Ref: IDG/GSC/2020-21/OTM(W-01)			Date: 18/02/2021
1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Education.	
2	Agency	University Grants Commission/National University.	
3	Procuring entity name	Principal, Govt. Suhrawardi College, Pirojpur.	
4	Procuring entity code	N/A.	
5	Procuring entity district	Pirojpur.	
6	Invitation for	Renovation & Refurbishment of IDG Office, Class Rooms, Wash Rooms, Library, Laboratories and Common room.	
7	Invitation Ref No.	IDG/GSC/2020-21/OTM(W-01)	
8	Date	18/02/2021	
KEY INFORMATION			
9	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (National).	
FUNDING INFORMATION			
10	Budget and source of funds	Development Budget (Government & IDA Credit).	
11	Development partners	International Development Association (IDA), World Bank.	
PARTICULAR INFORMATION			
12	Project code	224017200	
13	Project name	College Education Development Project (CEDP).	
14	Tender Package No.	W-01	
15	Tender package name	Renovation & Refurbishment of IDG Office, Class Rooms, Wash Rooms, Library, Laboratories and Common room.	
16	Tender publication date	18/02/2021	
17	Tender last selling date	03/03/2021, Time: 05.00pm.	
18	Tender closing date and time	04/03/2021, Time: 2.00pm.	
19	Tender opening date and time	04/03/2021, Time: 2.45pm.	
20	Name & address of the office	Govt. Suhrawardi College, Pirojpur.	
	Selling tender document		
	Receiving tender document		
	Opening tender document		
21	Place /date/time of pre-tender meeting (optional)	Will not be held.	
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER			
22	Eligibility of tenderer	1. The minimum number of years of general experience of the tenderer in the construction works as prime contractor or subcontractor or management contractor shall be 03 (three) years. Years counting backward from the date of publication of IFT in the newspaper. 2. The minimum specific experience as a prime contractor or subcontractor or management contractor in the building construction/renovation/refurbishment/extension works of at least 01 (one) contract(s) of similar nature, complexity and methods/construction technology successfully completed within the last 05 (five) years with a value of at least BDT 28,50,000.00 (twenty-eight lac fifty thousand) only. Years counting backward from the date of publication of IFT in the newspaper. 3. The required average annual construction turnover shall be greater than Tk 40,00,000.00 (forty lac) over the last 3 years. 4. The minimum amount of liquid assets i.e. working capital or credit line(s) of the tenderers shall be Tk 20,00,000.00 (twenty lac). 5. Other criteria mentioned in TDS.	
23	Brief description of goods or works	Brick work, Plaster, Floor & wall tiles, Aluminium thair work, Door window repair, grill repair, paint, Sanitary work & Electrification works etc.	
24	Brief description of related services	Related service shall be in accordance with Section 4: Particular Conditions of Contract, Section 6: Schedule of Requirements and Section 7: Technical Specification of the tender document.	
25	Tender document price	BDT 1,500.00 (one thousand five hundred).	
26	Tender name	Location	Tender security amount (Tk) 75,000.00 (seventy-five thousand)
	Renovation & Refurbishment of IDG Office, Class Rooms, Wash Rooms, Library, Laboratories and Common room.	Govt. Suhrawardi College, Pirojpur	3 (three) months
27	Name of official inviting tender	Professor Syed Ali Azam.	
28	Designation of official inviting tender	Principal.	
29	Address of official inviting tender	Govt. Suhrawardi College, Pirojpur.	
30	Contact details of official inviting tender	Tel: 0461-62650	Fax: N/A E-mail: gscpirojpur@gmail.com
31	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.		
Professor Syed Ali Azam ID No. 7274 Principal Govt. Suhrawardi College, Pirojpur			