



"Even today, inequality between communities, between groups, and intolerance prevail. That is not what Bangabandhu had imagined. We need to reflect on it."
PM'S INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS ADVISER GOWHER RIZVI



"I'm still in a lot of pain, but I feel the pain of my people even more."
WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER MAMATA BANERJEE
TWEETS AHEAD OF BIG RALLY IN KOLKATA



"Our goal is to make sure... to offer a credible deterrence to China or anybody else who would want to take on the US."
US DEFENSE SECRETARY LLOYD AUSTIN

CONTAINING FRESH COVID SURGE

Govt to ramp up measures

Enforce health safety guidelines strictly, introduce mobile court against violators

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A sudden surge in Covid-19 cases in the country has sparked fresh fears, forcing the authorities to issue official instructions and take up measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

The government has asked officials at all administrative tiers to implement the health guidelines properly and re-launch mobile court drives to punish those not following the rules. It has also ordered the health authorities to maintain adequate oxygen flow at hospitals in case the situation worsens.

On Saturday in a meeting of the Awami League Local Government Nomination Board, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who is the head of the party, instructed all to follow health safety rules strictly. She also said she was closely monitoring the Covid-19 situation.

"We're seeing a rise in coronavirus [infection]. It is alarming. We all will have to be alert and follow the health guidelines like we did previously. I'm personally

monitoring the situation," an Awami League presidium member quoted her as saying.

During her speech, the prime minister hinted that the government may reconsider extending the closure of educational institutions.

"Educational institutions will be reopened if the situation becomes normal," said the presidium member, on condition of anonymity.

As per the existing schedule, secondary and higher secondary educational institutions are scheduled to reopen on March 30, universities on May 24 and student dormitories on May 17.

Contacted, Deputy Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury told this paper that no dates, however, were final.

"Everything depends on the transmission [of the virus] and vaccination rate," he added.

The country has been witnessing a fresh surge in Covid-19 infections and deaths for the past several days. Yesterday, the health

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Construction workers inspecting a collapsed pier cap of the Bus Rapid Transit project in front of the Polwel Carnation Shopping Centre in Uttara. The pier cap had collapsed early yesterday. In a separate incident hours later, a portion of a launching girder of the same project collapsed near Dhaka airport around 10:30am, leaving six workers, including three Chinese nationals, injured.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Shab-e-Barat on March 29

UNB, Dhaka

Muslims in Bangladesh will observe the Shab-e-Barat on the night of March 29 as the Shaban moon was not sighted in the country yesterday.

The decision was taken at the National Moon Sighting Committee meeting the last evening.

Ministry of Religious Affairs Secretary Mohammad Nurul Islam presided over the meeting.

The announcement was made after analysing data collected from the district administrations, Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh Meteorological Department, and Space Research and Remote Sensing Institute.

Shab-e-Barat is observed on the 15th night of the

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UK VARIANT OF COVID-19 At least 10 cases detected so far

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Health officials have detected over 10 people with the UK variant of the coronavirus.

"But the number may change tomorrow," said Prof Tahmina Shirin, director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research.

The cases have been detected through genome sequencing, she told The Daily Star. Tahmina added that she would not say the highly contagious UK variant has spread across the country and also would not attribute the recent surge in new cases to the UK variant.

Researchers are working to expand the number of genome sequencing to find out more cases, she said.

"Genome sequencing is a continuous process and we are doing it regularly to find out more cases," she added.

The director did not say how much genome sequencing has already been done.

"The variant has slowly mutated from time to time. We are also looking into the mutated ones."

The UK variant of coronavirus, also known as N501Y.V1, was detected in Bangladesh on January 5.

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TORTURE IN CUSTODY Court accepts case filed by Kishore

PBI asked to probe

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday directed the Police Bureau of Investigation to launch a probe into a case filed over the torture of cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore while he was in custody.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after accepting the case. Additional Public Prosecutor Tapash Kumar Pal told The Daily Star. The court ordered PBI to conduct the investigation with a PBI official of superintendent of police ranking and submit the probe report by April 15.

The court also asked the director of Dhaka Medical College Hospital to form a three-member medical board to examine the torture that Kishore

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BRT PROJECT SITE NEAR AIRPORT Accidents expose lack of safety

Six injured as part of launching girder falls on them; a pier cap also collapses; probe body formed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least six workers, including three Chinese nationals, involved in construction of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Line-3 were injured as a part of a launching girder fell on them while they were working near Dhaka airport yesterday.

The accident took place around 10:30am, hours after a pier cap of an elevated section of the same BRT line collapsed, exposing serious weaknesses in safety measures.

A launching girder is a type of gantry crane used for lifting and installing girders of viaducts.

All the injured were admitted to Evercare Hospital in the capital. The condition of one of the Chinese workers was stated to be critical while another was discharged from the hospital, said officials.

The Tk 4,268.38-crore project, which witnessed several revisions of both cost and deadline, is being implemented by Dhaka Bus Rapid Transit Company Limited (DBRTCL), a government-owned company, to set up a 20.50km line for dedicated bus service from Dhaka airport to Gazipur.

Though the latest deadline for completing the project is June next year, it witnessed overall progress of about 52 percent till February this year, officials said.

The project is funded by Asian Development Bank, French Development Agency and Global Environment Facility. Three government agencies -- Roads and Highways Department (RHD), Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) and Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) -- are involved in the implementation of various segments of the project.

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No political or social gathering for 10 days

DMP urges all concerned as nation celebrates 50yrs of independence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday urged city dwellers not to hold any political and social programme in the capital during the 10-day state celebrations, starting on March 17, marking the country's golden jubilee of independence and Mujib Borsho.

The DMP also warned of congestion on roads due to state events.

"We are discouraging political and social organisations from holding any programme during this period," acting commissioner Monirul Islam told reporters at the DMP headquarters yesterday.

"If a programme is scheduled during the period [March 17-26], please postpone it," he added.

No one should hold what he said are "anti-national" programmes.

The independence golden jubilee and Mujib Borsho celebrations are linked to the country's reputation, he said.

Monirul added that state guests would participate in various programmes during the celebrations and suggested that people keep congestion in mind when they leave home during the 10-day period.

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Gas cylinders lined up on the ground floor of a multi-storey apartment building in Ulon area of Rampura in the capital. The cylinders are kept there and connected to the kitchens upstairs using pipes as the apartment residents fear that the cylinders might explode. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

টেকসই ও নবায়নযোগ্য জ্বালানি উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ (স্রেডা)
বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ

জ্বালানি দক্ষ যন্ত্রপাতি স্থাপনে,
৫% হারে ঋণ গ্রহণ করুন।

জ্বালানি সাশ্রয়ের মাধ্যমে নিজে লাভবান হউন
এবং দেশকে উপকৃত করুন।

সাশ্রয়ে জ্বালানি, সমৃদ্ধ আগামী

"জ্বালানি দক্ষতা ও সংরক্ষণ বৃদ্ধি কার্যক্রমে অর্থায়ন প্রকল্প"

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