

DEATH OF PRINCE PHILIP

Bangladesh lost a true friend: PM

UNB, DHAKA

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said Bangladesh and the British Bangladeshi community have lost a true friend and ally with the demise of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

"With his passing away, Bangladesh and the British Bangladeshi community have lost a true friend and ally," she said in a condolence letter, signed on April 9, to Queen Elizabeth II, according to a release from the Press Wing of the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

In the letter she said, "To the People of Bangladesh, HRH The Duke will always remain an example of duty and honour, and a pillar of strength and support to Your Majesty, and to the Commonwealth People."

She recalled the Queen's two historic visits to Bangladesh accompanied by The Duke of Edinburgh.

"May the Almighty bequeath courage and fortitude to Your Majesty, the member of the bereaved Royal family and the People of United Kingdom to bear with this irreplaceable loss."



With the sharp rise of Covid-19 cases, patients of all kinds, including this baby -- suffering from respiratory complications since birth -- cannot avail essential medical care, as hospitals are already running beyond capacity. The little one's family had been running from one place to another in search of available healthcare facilities, and were seen waiting in an ambulance at Chattogram Medical College Hospital yesterday, hoping for some service.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

It's unfortunate, some SC verdicts not being implemented properly

Says Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain yesterday said some of the Supreme Court verdicts are not being implemented properly even after contempt of court proceedings are initiated to this effect, which is very unfortunate.

All the authorities concerned of the state are constitutionally obligated to comply with the SC directives, he said.

The chief justice said this while speaking as the chief guest at a meeting, organised virtually to launch two books on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Liberation War written by two SC judges.

Of the books, "Bangabandhu Bangladesh: Ekjon Juddhoshishur Golpo O Onyanya" (Bangabandhu Bangladesh: Story of a War Child and Others) has been written by Justice Obaidul Hassan, a judge of the SC's Appellate Division.

Another book titled "Bangabandhu: Sangbidhan Ain Adalat O Onyanya" (Bangabandhu: Constitution, Law, Court and Others) has been written by Justice M Enayetur Rahim, a judge of the SC's High Court Division.

The chief justice said there is no necessity for setting up a cell to ensure implementation of the SC judgements as all the authorities are bound to abide by the verdicts as per article 112 of the constitution.

Article 112 states, "All authorities, executive and judicial, in the Republic shall act in aid of the Supreme Court."

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Ekushey Book Fair to close tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday decided to conclude Amar Ekushey Boi Mela (book fair) tomorrow instead of Wednesday, the scheduled closure date, as another seven-day countrywide lockdown will start from Wednesday.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid made the announcement through a press release yesterday.

The decision came at a time when the government is going to enforce another weeklong strict lockdown all over the country from Wednesday to curb the rising Covid-19 infections.

"We had no alternative but to bring down the curtain on Boi Mela on April 12... Besides, number of Covid-19 infections and casualties are increasing every day," the state minister for cultural affairs ministry told The Daily Star.

Earlier, several public health experts spoke in favour of closure of Boi Mela, a major annual event of the country held with much fanfare and festivities, as the number of Covid-19 infections has been increasing, especially from the end of March.

Although Boi Mela is taking place in an open area majorly, many visitors and staffers of book shops seemed oblivious regarding maintaining health safety measures and social distancing.

The book fair, which started on March 18 amid the resurgence of Covid-19 and was scheduled to end on April 14, failed to get its usual momentum with publishers and sellers.

Although the government enforced a weeklong lockdown from April 4, The fair was allowed to continue.

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No dedicated doctors, staff for ICU at RMCH

Backup power took 'too long' to start during April 4 nor'wester, alleges family after Covid suspect patient dies

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

When the season's first nor'wester hit on the afternoon of April 4, the thought of a potential power blackout made Mokarram Hossain worried as he was attending to his brother Muhibullah Bahar at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

Bahar, a principal officer of Agrani Bank's Pabna branch, was on oxygen support at the hospital's 20-bed ICU as a suspected Covid-19 patient.

His elder brother Hossain, a teacher of Pabna Sudhir Kumar High School and College, felt relieved when he learnt that RMCH has a generator and the ICU was supported by two electricity connections and a system of instant power backup in case of a failure.

But Hossain's peace of mind was short-lived as the entire city of Rajshahi witnessed around seven hours of blackout following the

almost two-hour storm since 3:55pm.

He switched on the flashlight of his phone as darkness fell over the ICU room. Attendants of other patients did the same.

"All of us panicked. Some even started to cry thinking about what will happen to their loved ones," he told this correspondent recently.

Doctors and nurses rushed in, tried to restore power, but they appeared to be helpless, he said, adding that some staffers were running around with portable machines not sure of what to do.

This is not an isolated situation at the ICU of RMCH. Even though the hospital's ICU was upgraded to 20-bed from 5-bed last year to cope with the coronavirus pandemic, it has been functioning without a single skilled and full-time dedicated or specialised staff member.

As a result, patients' attendants constantly remain at the ICU to look after them, even though no one other

than skilled professionals is supposed to be inside such a special department of a hospital that provides intensive care medicine -- that too at a time of the pandemic.

In addition, an outage longer than a few minutes can become life threatening for patients, said senior doctors, adding that further treatment is rarely useful when oxygen saturation level of a patient fall even for once.

Authorities, however, say they have backup power supply to deal with the crisis, but have other limitations, which they are trying to address.

The ICU has been staffed with less than 100 doctors, nurses, technicians and cleaners from other departments of the hospital, RMCH director Brig Gen Shamim Yazdani told The Daily Star on Thursday.

"A 20-bed ICU requires at least 150 skilled staff members -- each patient requiring a doctor and two nurses on standby," he added.

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Obaidul Quader blames it on BNP

Says the party's statements, provocations behind people's apathy to follow health rules

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Calling upon BNP to stand by people instead of doing politics over the Covid-19 pandemic, Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said many are getting scope to show indifference towards health guidelines due to BNP's reckless statements and provocations.

Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, came up with the remarks at a press conference at his official residence in the capital.

"BNP is spreading rumours against the government every day...," said Quader.

Saying the Awami League government welcomes any constructive criticism not rumours or propaganda, the party's general secretary called upon BNP to give constructive advice to the government instead of engaging in "blind criticisms".

"At present, opposing everything has become BNP's politics. I urge BNP to stand beside people instead of doing politics over coronavirus," the minister said.

The minister said BNP did politics over Covid-19 vaccines and now they are spreading misleading information regarding the lockdown.

"What did BNP do for the welfare of people apart from criticisms and spreading falsehood during the pandemic?" he questioned.

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Those involved in anarchy to face stern action

Warns law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday warned that the government will take stern action against those who will try to create anarchy, chaos and damage the lives and properties of the people in the country.

"The people have voted the government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to discharge the responsibilities for serving them. If anybody makes any attempt to hamper that, the government must take action in accordance with the law," he said.

He said this while replying to queries from reporters after receiving the second dose of Covid-19 vaccine at Armed Forces Medical College Hospital in the capital.

Mentioning that the government has capability to provide vaccines to all, the law minister urged all to get vaccinated, saying that the rapid surge of Covid-19 cases will be reduced if people receive vaccines.

A distress call on FB brings him back home

Man who fell ill in Saudia Arabia after performing Umrah returns to country after one year with help of police HQ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"Sir, please help me. I do not want to die here. If I die here, my body will remain in a mortuary fridge as an unknown body."

Mohammad Ibrahim (25), who went to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah but failed to return home in time after he fell sick and became an illegal immigrant there, sent this message to the Facebook page of Bangladesh Police.

The Media and Public Relations Wing of Police Headquarters (PHQ), that runs the social media account, intervened. Officials of the wing communicated with the Bangladesh Embassy in Saudi Arabia there through a foreign ministry official, personally known to an officer of the media wing.

Finally, the embassy arranged legal documents for Ibrahim who flew back home in a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight on April 9 after about an year of nightmarish life in Saudi Arabia.

"Ibrahim was severely sick for a long time, but could not even go to hospital for treatment due to lack of money and legal documents. He even could not return to the country. So, he wanted the cooperation from us to bring him back to the country," Assistant Inspector General (Media) of the PHQ Sohel Rana told The Daily Star last night.

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Heat has set in well as 2021 rolls into mid-April. It's an exhausting time to be a citizen of Dhaka, and perhaps equally draining to be a crow as well. Luckily for these ones in front of the Central Shaheed Minar, a couple of half-eaten watermelons were there to help them quench their thirst. This photo was taken on Friday.



A newborn foal and the mother Zebra at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Safari Park in Gazipur. Though the park remained closed for most of 2020, one silver lining can be found in its increasing zebra population. In the last two years, 11 foals were born, while another eight zebras are waiting to give birth. Park authorities credit the increase in the animals' comfort during the closure as the most important contributing factor to the rise in breeding. The photo was taken on Friday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

BUET HONOURS ADMISSION Application process to start on Thursday

DU CORRESPONDENT

Application process for Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology's (Bu et) admission test for 2020-21 honours academic session will begin on Thursday and will continue till April 24.

Admission seekers will be required to sit for preliminary selection exams, from which candidates will be selected for the final exam, scheduled to be held on June 10.

Eligibility list for preliminary admission test, scheduled to be held on May 31 and June 1, will be published on May 5. Eligibility list for the final exam will be released on June 5.

List of selected candidates and waiting list will be published on July 1.

The dates may change, considering the Covid-19 situation.

A circular with all necessary information, including admission eligibility, has been published on Bu et's website (bu et.ac.bd). Application fee can be paid via selected online banking portals or mobile financial services within April 24.

USAID to launch project to promote clean energy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

USAID will soon launch a multi-year project with allocation of up to \$17 million to promote clean energy, said the US embassy yesterday, a day after US President's Special Envoy for Climate John Kerry's visit to Dhaka.

The project titled "Bangladesh Advancing Development and Growth through Energy" will work to expand Bangladeshis' access to affordable clean energy, support clean energy entrepreneurship, foster transparent and efficient energy markets, and advance innovation.

"It [project] is also critical to curbing the country's carbon emissions, which nearly quadrupled over the past two decades. Not only will it reduce emissions, but will also improve living standards for the people of Bangladesh and will support continued rapid economic growth," the statement said.

For more than two decades, USAID has helped Bangladesh transform the country's energy sector and protect its natural resources, including more than 2.5 million acres of wetlands and forest areas, which contain habitats for the iconic Bengal tiger in the Sundarbans, it added.

John Kerry was in Dhaka to invite Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to attend the Leaders' Summit on Climate to be hosted by Joe Biden on April 22-23.

At least 40 world leaders from major economies and climate vulnerable countries will attend the summit, ahead of COP26, which is scheduled to be held in Glasgow, UK in November this year.

US' return to Paris Agreement, from which the former president Donald Trump pulled out, generated hopes among scientists and world leaders to protect the world from climate change.

John Kerry on Friday told reporters in Dhaka that the US will pay \$2 billion to the Green Climate Fund and will play leadership role in mobilising \$100 billion annually for the fund meant to promote mitigation and adaptation.