

The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

www.thedailystar.net

PLUS 8-PAGE TABLOID ON PAHELA BAISHAKH SPECIAL

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XXXI No. 90

BAISHAKH 1, 1428 BS

Your Right to Know

RAMADAN 1, 1442 HIJRI

16 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00



'VERY BAD GAMBLE'
Iran FM warns Israel, US after 'attack' on the Natanz atomic site
SEE PAGE 6



"What is going on in the name of lockdown? People are on the streets and factories are open. It seems there is no planning..."
BNP SECRETARY GENERAL MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR



"We have to control the second Covid-19 wave as we did last year. And for this, we have to refrain from unnecessary movement."
IGP BENAZIR AHMED



"I urge governments to consider a solidarity or wealth tax on those who have profited during the pandemic, to reduce extreme inequalities."
UN CHIEF ANTONIO GUTERRES

Rush, queues everywhere

People hurry to leave city, withdraw money, buy essentials as stricter curbs take effect today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People in their thousands left the capital for their village homes yesterday as the government is set to enforce what officials dubbed as a nationwide strict lockdown for a week starting this morning to curb the spread of Covid-19.

In the capital, there were long queues at banks and ATM booths and also a huge rush at kitchen markets and shopping malls on the eve of the holy month of Ramadan and Pahela Baishakh.

Officials say the fresh restrictions will be enforced strictly all over the country amid a worsening Covid situation as the previous restrictions had apparently proved less effective in containing the spread of the virus.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Benazir Ahmed yesterday urged all to strictly follow the restrictions to check the virus transmission.

"We don't want to see anyone on roads and outside home, except for emergencies, from April 14. Please follow the government rules spontaneously, and we won't be rude with anyone," the IGP told reporters in the capital after inaugurating the "movement pass" app.

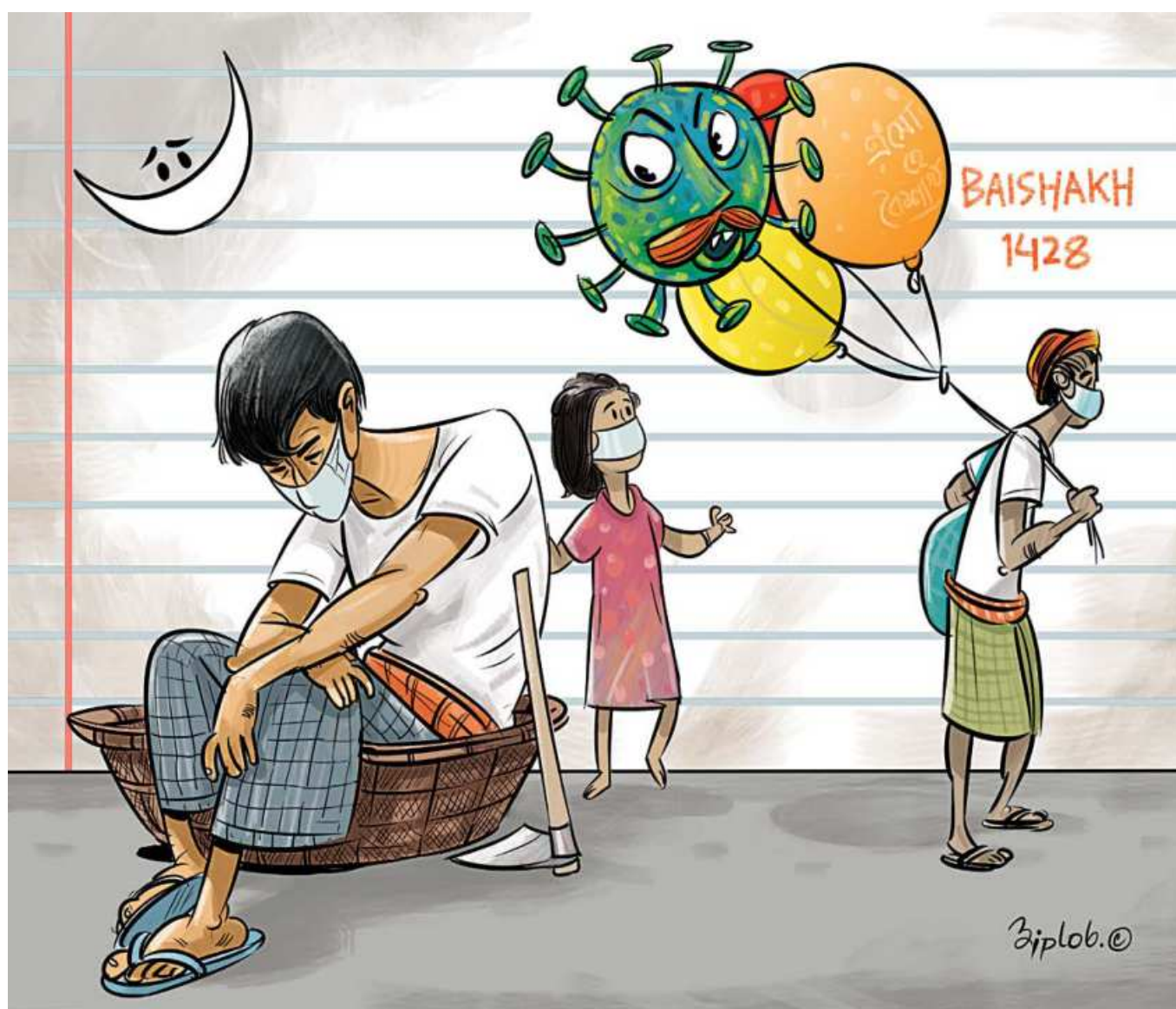
One can go outside in case of emergency during the strict restrictions, obtaining a pass through the app introduced by police.

Benazir further said millions left Dhaka amid the pandemic last year, and this time the same thing happened over the last two days.

He urged people outside the capital to ensure that those returning to

"MOVEMENT PASS" APP
Pass for individuals to go outside in case of emergency
SEE PAGE 3

BANKING HOURS
Certain branches of banks to stay open 10:00am-1:00pm
SEE B1



Grief, fright take colours off Baishakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangla year 1428 arrives today without the vigour and melody that comes with Pahela Baishakh. For the second

HOLIDAY NOTICE

The Daily Star offices will remain closed today on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh. Therefore, the newspaper will not come out tomorrow.

Ramadan begins amid restrictions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The holy month of Ramadan – a time when Muslims engage in self-purification through fasting and abstinence – begins in the country today as the new crescent moon was sighted in the sky yesterday evening.

This indicates that Lailatul Qadr, the night of divine blessing and benediction, will be observed on May 9.

The National Moon Sighting Committee took the decision at a meeting held at the Islamic Foundation's Baitul Mukarram office with Religious Affairs Minister Faridul Haque Khan in the chair.

After the meeting, Faridul announced the decision of the committee at a press conference.

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Do not panic, govt with you

PM tells nation in her Pahela Baishakh address, urges all to celebrate at home, follow health rules

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged all to follow health guidelines and celebrate Pahela Baishakh at home as the nation enters a strict weeklong lockdown to contain the upsurge in coronavirus cases.

"We have to remember that the lives of the people come first. If [we] survive, we'll be able to rearrange everything," she said while addressing the nation on the eve of Bengali New Year, Pahela Boishakh.

The PM also urged people not to be panicked at the second wave of Covid-19 and assured that her government is always with them. She asked the authorities concerned to take measures to provide necessary assistance to the poor and low-income people.

In her roughly 13-minute speech, Hasina said the government last week imposed some restrictions on the movement of people due to the second wave of coronavirus.

She said the rise in cases compelled the government to take some tough measures following the advice of public health experts.



The PM admitted that strict measures could cause some issues for the livelihoods of many people. She reminded everyone that protecting people's lives was the top priority.

The PM said the situation was not unique to Bangladesh. "Such steps are being taken

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PLASMA THERAPY Hardly effective on variants from South Africa, Brazil

ZYMA ISLAM

Researchers in Germany have found that the South African and Brazilian variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus might be able to evade "plasma therapy".

The study, which was recently published in the scientific journal called Cell, tested to see how well antibodies induced by infection and vaccination neutralise the South African (B.1.351) variant and the Brazilian (P.1) variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

The study was titled "SARS-CoV-2 variants B.1.351 and P.1 escape from neutralizing antibodies".

Antibodies induced by infection exist in the blood of convalescent or

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SECOND WAVE OF COVID-19 New symptoms now pronounced

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

Doctors have observed symptoms like severe fatigue, muscle pain, loss of appetite, diarrhoea, sleeplessness, and conjunctivitis in a large number of Covid-19 patients requiring medical treatment.

They said these symptoms were not so common in such patients during the first wave of the disease in the country. The Daily Star has learnt this after talking to doctors at four government and private hospitals treating Covid-19 patients in the capital.

"During the first wave, symptoms like fever, cough and loss of taste or smell were mainly observed in coronavirus patients. This time, a large number of patients are showing the additional symptoms," Dr Forhad Uddin Hasan, a medicine and infectious disease specialist at Dhaka Medical College Hospital's Covid-19 unit, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He also said critical patients were gasping for oxygen. Based on his experience of dealing with Covid-19 patients, Dr Tarek Alam, professor and head of medicine department of Bangladesh Medical College, said, "Almost all patients have been complaining of weakness and insomnia this time. They are also having diarrhoea."

"There has also been a basic change regarding the lungs infection. During the first wave of Covid-19, many patients' lungs were severely affected between the eighth and 14th day of being infected. This time, the virus is damaging the lungs faster, within four to five days," he said.

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ECONOMIC RECOVERY Bangladesh leads the way in South Asia

SAYS IMF

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Despite the recent spike in Covid-19 infections, South Asia excluding India is recovering, led by Bangladesh, due to higher-than-expected exports and remittances, the International Monetary Fund said yesterday.

The Washington-based multilateral lender revised its GDP projection for Bangladesh to 5 percent in 2021, up from its October last year's projection of 4.4 percent.

The nation's economy is expected to grow 7.5 percent next year, said the IMF at its Spring Meetings which took place virtually.

With a remittance income of \$18.60 billion,

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Brick kiln labourers and their family members on a truck are stuck in a long tailback near Shimulia ferry ghat in Munshiganj's Louhajang upazila yesterday. With brick kilns shut ahead of the weeklong lockdown, they are bound for their village homes in southern districts. Passengers had to endure long delays at ferry terminals yesterday as a large number of people left the capital and its adjoining districts. Inset, a truck carrying people leaves Savar's Aminbazar area.

PHOTO: SAJJAD HOSSAIN/ANISUR RAHMAN

VACCINE PURCHASE WB to provide \$500m more

REJAUH KARIM BYRON and DWAIPIYAN BARIJA

The World Bank has agreed to provide \$500 million to Bangladesh in additional financing to buy Covid-19 vaccines, but set some conditions regarding the procurement of the shots.

The main objective of the WB's additional financing for this project is -- vaccination of 31 percent of the total population of the country through direct purchase of Covid-19 vaccine recognised by the World Health Organization (WHO) or three Stringent Regulatory Authorities or advance purchase from Covid-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility (COVAX).

A loan agreement was signed between the government and the Washington-based global lender yesterday in this regard.

With this deal, the government inked three loan agreements with the WB in the last two days through virtual programmes. The WB is providing the country with

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Bangladesh cards rule West Bengal polls



PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

From slogans to smear campaigns, election pledges to blame games, Bangladesh has featured heavily in the discourse of rival parties in India's ongoing West Bengal assembly polls.

Bangladesh has always been an important factor for the eastern region of India, and West Bengal in particular. The fourth-most populous Indian state not only shares around 2,216 kilometres of border with Bangladesh, it also shares culture, language, climate and blood bonding with the country.

Against this backdrop, it is natural that Bangladesh comes up in political campaigns during the West Bengal polls.

This time around, however, Bangladesh is coming up more prominently than ever before and many of the political talking points portrayed the neighbouring country negatively, said political analysts.

India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has repeatedly used Bangladesh and Bangladeshi issues to draw Hindu

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