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The Daily Star

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"The government should have imposed a 'smart' restriction to contain Covid-19 spread in a way that could ensure people's lives and livelihoods together."
BRAC BOARD CHAIRPERSON HOSSAIN ZILLUR RAHMAN



"We're going to work together to prove that democracies can still compete and win in the 21st century."
US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN AS US, JAPAN SHOW UNITED FRONT ON CHINA



"Let there be no doubt, as long as I live, I will be ready... to defend the homeland, revolution and socialism."
RAUL CASTRO AFTER CONFIRMING HE IS STEPPING DOWN AS CUBA'S LEADER

BANSHKHALI POWER PLANT SITE

5 workers killed as cops open fire

24 including 3 policemen injured in clash during workers' demo for arrear, pay hike

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg and MOSTAFA YOUSUF, back from Banshkhali

Five workers of an under-construction coal-fired power plant were killed and at least 21 others injured during a clash with police in Banshkhali upazila of Chattogram yesterday morning.

Workers of the SS Power I Plant, a joint venture involving S Alam Group, alleged that the law enforcers opened fire on their peacefully demonstration demanding arrears and pay hikes. They said they were supposed to get arrears of one to three months.

Police and workers said the incident took place in the power plant area under Gandamara union around 9:30am.

Talking to The Daily Star, a witness, Miran Hossain Rocky, a cousin of one of the deceased, Raihan, an 18-year-old crane operator from Noakhali, said several hundred workers had been staging demonstrations over several demands, including payment of arrears, since Friday morning.

Police went to the agitators yesterday morning and requested them to go back to work, claiming that the factory owners had agreed to meet all the demands.

"But the workers did not believe the police and demanded that high officials from the power plant come and talk to them. A few minutes later, police appeared again and started firing shots in the air to disperse the protesters," said Miran, whose pants and T-shirt were soaked in blood.

Later, workers regrouped and started throwing brick chunks at the law enforcers, who had taken position nearby. At this, police started firing indiscriminately, leaving some dead and many other injured, several witnesses told The Daily Star.

"My cousin had just come out to his room to see what was happening when two bullets hit his left thigh. I rescued him and took him to two

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An injured worker of under-construction SS Power I Plant is being taken to Chattogram Medical College Hospital. Five workers were shot dead when they were demonstrating for salaries of up to three months in arrears. Police said the demonstrators threw brick chunks at police before the clash began. Inset, discarded goods set on fire at the power plant in Bashkhali.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Cops arrest 2 more Hefajat leaders in city

7 other supporters held in B'baria

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested two top leaders of Hefajate-Islam from the capital along seven supporters of the Islamist group from Brahmanbaria.

The two leaders are Dhaka City unit President Maulana Zunayed Al Habib and an Assistant Secretary General Maulana Jalaluddin Ahmed.

Maulana Zunayed is also the joint secretary general of Hefajat, a Qawmi madrasa-based Islamist organisation.

Law enforcers said that the two were arrested in connection with cases filed following the 2013 mayhem and the one in late March this year.

Detectives arrested Zunayed from the city's Baridhara area in the evening and Jalaluddin from Mohammadpur area.

Mahbub Alam, joint commissioner of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, confirmed the

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Second wave sees crisis over a certain drug

MID SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

"Please help me to find Actemra 400mg injection (Tocilizumab) for my Covid patient mother. She is currently in ICU. Please help..." read a recent appeal by Sazzad Hossain on a public Facebook group.

He desperately needed the medication, sold under the brand names Actemra and RoActemra, for his critically ill mother but he couldn't source it after visiting all the large drug stores in Dhaka.

"Then I came to know that this drug can be purchased only from certain distribution centres of the importer company. I rushed to the centre only to learn that their stock was already exhausted," Sazzad said.

Appeals like Sazzad's have flooded social media recently as the drug is being used to treat critical Covid-19 patients, whose numbers are surging in the second wave of Covid-19, and so, making the drug one of the most sought-after medicines in the country.

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54 districts now at high Covid risk

Virus spreading fast; IEDCR study shows 17 districts see 31-40pc positivity rate

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

The rising coronavirus cases from April 6 to 13 have turned 54 districts of the country into high-risk zones.

Based on the previous week's (March 29-April 5) data, the IEDCR had labelled 31 districts as high-risk zones, meaning the number of high-risk districts has nearly doubled in eight days.

Of the current high-risk districts, 17 have positivity rates between 31 and 40 percent while 13 others have positivity rates between 21 and 30 percent.

Dhaka topped the list of 64 districts with nearly 40 percent positivity rate while Khagrachhari, Bandarban, and Panchagarh were placed at the bottom with positivity rates below five percent.

The country's worsening pandemic situation was reflected in the latest "Covid-19 Situation Analysis" by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR). This newspaper has obtained a copy of the report.

Speaking to The Daily Star, health officials yesterday said the report also took into consideration the tests of outbound passengers who were subject to mandatory Covid-19 testing. If they were excluded, the positivity rates would have been higher.

According to the IEDCR, districts with positivity rates of 10 percent and above are marked as high-risk zones while those with rates between 5 and 10 percent as medium-risk zones and the others with rates below five percent as low-risk zones.

The IEDCR analysis categorised Feni, Rangamati, Cumilla, Moulvibazar, Sunamganj, Satkhira, and Pabna districts as medium-risk zones.

Of the high-risk 54 districts, 13 have positivity rates between 21 and 30 percent. The country witnessed a second wave of Covid-19 infections and deaths since the

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3 DISTRICTS AT LOW RISK
Khagrachhari, Bandarban and Panchagarh

7 DISTRICTS AT MEDIUM RISK
Feni, Rangamati, Cumilla, Moulvibazar, Sunamganj, Satkhira and Pabna

54 OTHER DISTRICTS AT HIGH RISK

17 districts see **31-40%** positivity rate while 13 districts see **21-30%**

Dhaka district has the highest 40% POSITIVITY RATE

ACC opens probe into BTCL graft

Irregularities found in tender process; four officials under scanner

SHAHID BAPPY

The Anti-Corruption Commission has initiated an investigation into allegations of graft in a project of state-run Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd.

In a letter to the BTCL managing director on March 25, the watchdog asked for relevant documents and information to probe irregularities in the project titled "Switching and Transmission Network Development for Strengthening Digital Connectivity".

Receiving no reply by the deadline of April 1, a reminder was sent on April 13.

In this connection, the ACC is investigating Nur-ur-Rahman, former chairman of the board of BTCL; Mohsinul Alam, director general of Department of Telecommunications; Md Moslehuddin, joint chief of the Post and Telecom Division, and Rafiqul Matin, managing director of BTCL.

The anti-graft body has assigned an investigation officer to look into the allegation that they amassed wealth illegally through corruption in the project.

On February 10, 2019, the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnc) approved the project under which BTCL floated a tender for the supply, installation, testing commission and procurement of dense wavelength division multiplexing (DWDM) transmission equipment.

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Prof Tareque found dead at Uttara flat

JU CORRESPONDENT

Noted political analyst Prof Tareque Shamsur Rehman was found dead at his Uttara flat in the capital yesterday.

He was 69.

Police had to break into the flat in RAJUK Uttara Apartment Project, Sector-14, around 11:00am to recover the body of the retired professor of international relations of Jahangirnagar University.

He was alone in the flat as his wife and daughter were in the USA.

Professor Shafiq-ur-Rahman of JU confirmed the news to The Daily Star.

"I live in an apartment next to his. As the door

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Sparse traffic on Dhaka-Chattogram highway, one of the busiest roads in the country, as police set up barriers and checkpoints to enforce the strict travel restrictions amid the second wave of the coronavirus. The photo was taken yesterday in the capital's Rayerbagh area.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

16m become new poor in Bangladesh

SMEs worst victim of job losses due to pandemic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 3 percent of the labour force lost jobs while 16.38 million people became new poor amid the pandemic, according to a new study.

The Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and informal sectors saw the highest number of job losses, it said.

Between March and September, last year, some 0.4 million migrant workers lost their jobs, added the report titled Recovery of the Labour Market during Covid-19: Role of Trade Union.

Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), presented the key findings of the study at a virtual dialogue jointly organised by the CPD and Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS).

Women-led enterprises were more vulnerable during the crisis and about 50 percent of those enterprises reported laying off 76-100 percent of their workers, it said.

It added that manufacturing, construction, transport, wholesale and retail businesses, food, accommodation services and personal services faced the highest risks while medium-high risk sectors included finance, domestic service, real estate, and education, and low-risk sectors included agriculture, health, information, and communication.

About 69 percent of the employed population in urban areas was in high-risk. The pandemic has opened up business opportunities in a few sectors including e-commerce, health, and pharmaceuticals.

The most affected workers' groups were the labourers in urban areas engaged in construction, informal services

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