

**'DIRE WARNING' FOR THE PLANET**

CO2 emissions set to surge as world eyes quick recovery from Covid crisis

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**"BNP, not only patronized the recent Hefajat mayhem, but was also involved in it."**  
ROAD TRANSPORT AND BRIDGES MINISTER  
OBAIDUL QUADER



**"A big country should look like a big country by showing that it is shouldering more responsibility."**  
CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING CALLS FOR FAIRER WORLD ORDER



**"We have the tools to bring this pandemic under control in a matter of months, if we apply them consistently and equitably."**  
WHO CHIEF TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS

## Pandemic creates 2.45cr new poor

Second wave hits amid significant depletion of household income and fragile recovery from last year's shock, says PPRC-BIGD survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The economic shock induced by the pandemic has pushed 2.45 crore people -- 14.75 percent of the country's population -- into poverty in one year, according to a new survey.

The survey found that the pandemic caused a significant depletion of households' income and forced a large number of the population into leaving cities and taking shelter in their village homes.

Those people had to head home as they became jobless. Their situation was worsened by rising living expenses, dwindling savings and mounting debt, said the survey.

The Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and the Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) came up with the findings at a virtual press conference yesterday.

"It is thought that the 'new poor' is a temporary matter. But one year after the pandemic, we see that a large number of the people, who went below the poverty line [due to the pandemic], are yet to come out of poverty," PPRC Executive Chairman Hossain Zillur Rahman said at the briefing. It is the third study by the PPRC and

- Informal loans of households in cities increased by 86% in one year
- Urban people forced to cut food expenditure by 17% due to pandemic
- 9.8% of people migrated from cities yet to return
- Economic hardship to deepen if last year's income shock recurs

the BIGD on the coronavirus' impact on people's income and poverty. For this, Rapid Response Research (RRR) of the two organisations carried out a panel survey in March on over 6,000 people living in rural and urban slums.

In its first survey, on a similar number of households in slums, in April last year, the RRR found that around 3.7 crore people or 22 percent of the population became the "new poor" due to the first wave of the pandemic. It meant that they joined the previous 20.5 percent of the population who had already been poor.

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A road in the capital's Karwan Bazar area is crammed with sellers and buyers as they flout health safety rules. Violation of lockdown restrictions continues in the city amid the surge in coronavirus infections. The photo was taken around 7:00am yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Positivity rate keeps dropping

91 more die of Covid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The positivity rate of Covid-19 tests continued to decline for the fifth consecutive day yesterday.

During the 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, the positivity rate was 16.85 percent against 27,056 tests in 265 laboratories across the country. Ninety-one people died of Covid during that period.

On the previous day (Monday), the positivity rate was 17.68 percent. It was 19.06 percent on Sunday, 21.46 percent on Saturday, and 23.36 percent on Friday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) data.

The positivity rate -- the percentage of positive cases against the total number of tests in a day -- is one of

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## Oxygen supply stretched to limit

Demand double as Covid spreads faster than ever; supply to industries mostly halted to meet medical needs

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

Supply of medical oxygen to public hospitals is under strain as the demand for the life-sustaining gas has doubled over the last few weeks, posing new challenges in the battle against the second wave of the coronavirus infections.

Amidst heightened demand for oxygen, most suppliers have already stopped supplying oxygen to industries, dedicating all its production for hospitals treating Covid-19 patients.

With the second wave being much stronger than the first, more and more patients are in need of oxygen support as the highly transmissible virus, fuelled by new strains, is infecting lungs severely, causing serious breathing problems for many, hospital sources said.

Uninterrupted oxygen supply is extremely crucial in saving lives of critical coronavirus patients. Most patients are coming with severe shortness of breath and



need oxygen via a high-flow nasal cannula, they said.

Officials at the Directorate General of Health Services said around 100 tonnes of oxygen are required every day to ensure uninterrupted supply at government hospitals.

Ninety percent of the supply comes from Linde Bangladesh Ltd, a multinational company, and the rest is supplied by Islam Oxygen Ltd and Spectra Oxygen Ltd, they said.

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## Sputnik V vaccine Russia offers to sell 2.5cr shots

Gives Bangladesh option for assistance in production

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The Russian government has offered Bangladesh to either buy around 2.5 crore doses of Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine or produce the shots locally with its assistance.

The foreign ministry has informed the health ministry about the recent communication from the Russian government in this regard.

"The government of Russia has proposed that it can either export around 2.5 crore doses to Bangladesh or help us produce the same number of doses locally by December this year in phases," Health Minister Zahid Maleque told The Daily Star last night.

He said the Russian government also offered exporting another 3.5 crore doses of the vaccine by April next year in phases.

"They have informed us that they can

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## Ensure everyone gets vaccine

PM urges UN, global institutions to meet vaccine demand of all

BSS, Dhaka

Describing Covid-19 vaccines as global public goods, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Bangladesh believes in primacy of United Nations and other international institutions to meet everyone's demand for vaccines and medical requirements on the basis of equity and justice.

"All nations need to work together to make the UN and other international organisations effective so that everyone's requirement of vaccines and medical requirement are met," she said.

In her recorded speech aired in the plenary of a conference of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA), the premier also said the WHO, GAVI and other relevant organisations must uphold the rights of the member states and ensure equity and justice.

"We strongly believe that Covid-19 vaccines should be declared as global public goods. Countries producing the vaccines should help others produce the vaccines with a view to attaining universal vaccine coverage."

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## 'Lockdown' extension now official

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ongoing travel and other restrictions will be extended for a week from tomorrow considering the current situation of Covid-19 in the country.

The cabinet division yesterday issued a circular in this regard as the existing lockdown, imposed to curb the spike in Covid-19 cases, will expire after midnight today.

However, special flights and banking will go on, it stated.

The cabinet has also decided to open accounts offices at the field level on a limited scale to prevent disruption in development and regular activities due to the restriction on movement.

The cabinet division on April 12 issued a circular regarding a "strict lockdown" from 6:00am on April 14 to April 21 midnight as its earlier version failed to keep people at home.

On Monday, the cabinet division sent a proposal to extend the restrictions to the Prime Minister's Office

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With his health deteriorating, Covid patient Nurul Huda being shifted to the Intensive Care Unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday. Dependent on oxygen, the 52-year-old patient from Laxmipur was admitted to the coronavirus unit of the hospital on Thursday with breathing problems.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Up against wall, Hefajat seeks to back down

Trying to negotiate with govt so the crackdown stops

RASHIDUL HASAN and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Under pressure due to the ongoing crackdown on its top leaders, Hefajat-e-Islam is now trying to negotiate with the government.

In a bid to convince the government and gain its confidence, a delegation of Hefajat met Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal at his home Monday night and assured him that Qawmi madrasa students will not be involved in any anti-government or anti-state activities.

The crackdown followed countrywide mayhem by Hefajat men in late last month. Hefajat's Joint Secretary General Mamunul Haque was arrested, among others. He in police remand yesterday said he tried to grab state power using madrasa students who had been provoked by his speeches and sermons, sources told The Daily Star.

To make good, Hefajat has engaged its senior and, apparently known as, apolitical figures to negotiate with the government with an aim to stop the arrest of its leaders and to have the ones arrested released, sources said.

The delegation that met the home boss includes Hefajat Nayeb-e-Amir Ataullah Hafeji and Hefajat Secretary General Nurul Islam Jihadi. They emphasised that Hefajat men were not involved in the three-day-long violence. Rather some third party was involved.

Meeting sources said despite the Hefajat leaders' assurance, the government has decided to take legal action against Hefajat men involved in the recent mayhem that killed at least 17 people.

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