



US, Britain rush supplies to India

Retired military medics recalled as new Covid infections hit a record peak for fifth day

AGENCIES

The United States and Britain rushed ventilators and vaccine materials to virus-stricken India yesterday while Italy lifted many Covid-19 restrictions in a bid to kickstart a near normal summer.

India is battling a catastrophic, record-breaking outbreak that has overwhelmed hospitals and set crematoriums working at full capacity.

A day-after-day surge has seen patients' families take to social media to beg for oxygen supplies and available hospital beds, forcing the capital New Delhi to extend a week-long lockdown.

But in Europe, it was a story of hope as bars, restaurants, cinemas and concert halls were reopening across Italy yesterday.

And in a boost for businesses, the parliament in Rome was to debate the government's 220-billion-euro (\$266-billion) EU-funded recovery plan.

Prime Minister Mario Draghi has admitted to taking a "calculated risk" with the reopenings, with virus statistics improving but Covid-19 deaths still mounting by hundreds every day.

"Finally!" said Daniele Vespa, the 26-year-old head

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Owner of a shop selling flowers in the capital's Shahbagh area taking a nap around noon yesterday. Traders there said hardly any customer was going to their shops amid the restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the Covid-19. Hit hard by the pandemic, the traders in Shahbagh only see bleak days ahead.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

TCB goods available online

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People can now purchase essential products of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) at less than market prices online.

The state agency said it will sell sugar, lentil, edible oil and chickpea through certain online stores to enable the middle-income people to buy essential goods staying at home during the Ramadan.

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi inaugurated the activities virtually organised by e-Commerce Association of Bangladesh (e-CAB) with the support of TCB.

The minister said the TCB presently sells essential commodities in the open market so that the poor and low-income people get the products at subsidised rates.

Now the government has decided to sell the commodities through e-commerce platforms so that the middle class does not feel that they are deprived, he said.

He said e-commerce is getting popular during the pandemic.

People can get edible oil at Tk 108 a litre and chickpea, sugar and lentil at Tk 58 a kg.

A consumer can SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

38 DSA cases filed in three months

Says Article 19; ruling party men filing most cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the first three months of this year, 38 cases were filed under the Digital Security Act against individuals exercising their right to freedom of expression.

At least five journalists were among those charged in the cases, revealed Article 19, a British organisation that promotes the right to freedom of speech, yesterday.

"We are extremely concerned to see the number of cases and arrests made against those who were publishing news or expressing their opinions about corruption or ethical violations," said Article 19.

Recently, there have been allegations against a ruling party parliamentarian for vandalising the office of "Amar Habiganj" newspaper, stated Article 19.

On April 19, the newspaper had published a news regarding allegations that the parliamentarian occupied land belonging to a local temple.

"The victims claimed that the attack on their newsroom took place at the direct instructions of the MP while the police stood by watching," said Article 19's press

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ROAD TO FREEDOM
THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

'Don't squeeze Yahya'

APRIL 27, 1971
SHAMSUDDOZZA SAJEN

DON'T SQUEEZE YAHYA AT THIS TIME: NIXON
In a memorandum sent to President Richard Nixon today, the US President's Assistant for National Security Affairs Henry Kissinger provided three policy options towards the East Pakistan crisis: 1) unqualified backing for West Pakistan, 2) neutrality which in effect leans toward East Pakistan, and 3) an effort to help Yahya achieve a negotiated settlement. Nixon approved the third option and added a handwritten note that reads: "To all hands. Don't squeeze Yahya at this time." He underlined "Don't" three times.

In the assessment of the third option, Kissinger wrote: "[It] would have the advantage of making the most of the relationship with Yahya while engaging in a serious effort to move the situation toward conditions less damaging to US and Pakistani interests. Its disadvantage is that it might lead to a situation in which progress toward a political settlement had broken down, the US had alienated itself from the 600 million people in India and East Pakistan and the US was unable to influence the West Pakistani government to make the concessions necessary for a political settlement."

ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY SET UP IN BANGLADESH
AHM Kamaruzzaman, a minister of the provisional government, said today that an administrative machinery had already been set up to coordinate the Liberation War. He, however, declined to disclose the names of all the administrative heads for security reasons.

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Papul to serve seven years in Kuwait jail

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Kuwait's Appeal Court yesterday extended the imprisonment of former Bangladeshi MP Mohammad Shahid Islam alias Kazi Papul and two Kuwaitis to seven years, from four, in a bribery case.

The others whose sentences were increased include Kuwait's interior ministry's Assistant Under-Secretary Maj Gen Mazen Al-Jarrah and former MP candidate Salah Khorshid, reported Kuwaiti newspaper, Al-Qabas yesterday.

The court, however, acquitted Kuwaiti MP Saadoun Hammad.

The court delivered the verdict following an appeal filed by Papul after Kuwait's criminal court on January 28 sentenced him to four years, around eight months after Kuwait's Criminal Investigation Department arrested him.

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'Nomadland' wins big at Oscars

Director Zhao makes history



AFP, Hollywood

US road movie "Nomadland" emerged as the big winner at the Oscars on Sunday with three major prizes, including a history-making award for director Chloe Zhao, as Hollywood celebrated its most glamorous night with a unique pandemic-era gala.

Zhao's drama about marginalized Americans roaming the West in vans was honored for best picture, director and actress for Frances McDormand, who now is in elite company with her third Academy Award for performing.

No-show Anthony Hopkins pulled an upset

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ARMANITOLA FIRE 2 warehouse owners held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab arrested two men accused in a case filed over the devastating fire at an unauthorised chemical warehouse that killed five people in old Dhaka's Armanitola on Friday.

Mostafizur Rahman was arrested in Nandigram, Bogura, and Mohammad Mostafa in the capital's Uttara during Rab raids early yesterday, said Commander Khandaker Al Moin, Legal and Media Wing director of Rab.

They are the second and third accused in the case filed by Bangshal police against eight named and 27 to 28 unnamed people.

Both of them admitted storing chemicals and highly flammable goods in their warehouses and stores in Haji Musa Manson, the six-storey building which caught fire.

"They didn't have the permission to store chemical and flammable goods there," Commander Moin told a press briefing at Rab Media centre in the

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A child going back home on a motorcycle with a carrom board in hand. With the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic continuing for over a year now, many children are having to spend most of their time at home with indoor games and activities. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon at the capital's Farmgate area.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HUQ

Hyundai's 10 locomotives now being used

BR pushes them into service despite no decision from committee concerned

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh Railway has started using the 10 locomotives that a South Korean company supplied breaching contract. The move comes even when a BR body is evaluating if those engines should be used.

The first freight train, operated with one of the locomotives, reached Dhaka with goods on Sunday, four days after the authority gave directives to operate those locomotives "on trial basis until further notice," officials said.

Meanwhile, the project authority has asked Hyundai Rotem Company (HRC), the supplier of the locomotives, to change alternator, a major equipment of the locomotives, otherwise, the company will get less payment, they said.

These developments came weeks after the railway authority changed the project director (PD), who had halted HRC's payment for violating the contract, and appointed a new PD.

Besides, a technical committee, which has been assigned to determine whether the engines can be used for railway operations, was reconstituted after its chief opted to be not in the committee. The new committee is yet to submit its report.

"The locomotives are sitting idle for over six months due to a 'minor fault'. This is meaningless," PD Mohammad

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