

**POST-COUP MYANMAR**  
Country's pro-democracy  
unity govt tells Asean no  
talks until prisoners freed  
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Your Right to Know

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## Risking own lives to save lives

154 doctors died, 2911 infected so far on the frontline of Covid-19 pandemic

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Muhammad Asaduzzaman, a doctor treating Covid-19 patients, has nightmares that people are gasping for air and pleading to be saved.

"When someone touches your hand, begs for help to breathe and when that person dies before you, it's very difficult to keep your calm. It's extremely hard to sleep at night peacefully. It comes back to haunt you," he says.

An assistant professor and head of the department of critical care at the capital's Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Hospital, the 42-year-old doctor has been providing care to coronavirus patients for a year now. But over the last few weeks, the conditions of many critical patients have deteriorated fast, leaving physicians like Asaduzzaman absolutely hapless.

"I am tired of seeing people die. I could not do anything [in many cases] ... I feel like I am on the verge of having a psychological breakdown," he told The Daily Star.

Apart from claiming the lives of many doctors and health workers, the Covid-19 is also taking a heavy toll on their mental health.

According to Bangladesh Medical Association, 154 doctors have died and 2,911 others have been infected amid the pandemic. Besides, 23 nurses have lost their lives and 2,567 others contracted the virus, it said.

Although the health professionals have been resolute in the fight against the invisible enemy, they are now struggling due to exhaustion, anxiety, depression and sleep disorder owing to their long working hours

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- 23 nurses died, 2,567 infected
- 3,296 medical professionals infected
- 78.5% physicians experiencing psychological distress
- 61.9% nurses suffered from some degree of mental distress



Motiur Rahman, a 68-year-old Covid-19 patient, is being brought to Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday by his family members who said they could not afford the treatment costs at a private facility. Motiur was in a private hospital for three days and raked up a few lakh takas in bills.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Vaccines must be distributed with equity

FMs of 6 nations including Bangladesh, China say in joint statement

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

China and five South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, have opposed the idea of vaccine nationalism while calling for distribution of vaccine under the principles of equity and justice.

"The foreign ministers agreed that vaccines, as a key weapon to defeat Covid-19, should be distributed in accordance with the principles of equity and justice," said the foreign ministers of Bangladesh, China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal in a joint statement issued yesterday, following a video conference on Tuesday.

China expressed its readiness to provide continued medical supplies and technical assistance to the participating countries to the best of its ability.

At the video conference, the foreign ministers

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## REACHING THOSE IN NEED OF HELP

## Govt struggles for lack of enough data

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government faces a challenge in reaching the target population in need of financial assistance amid the Covid pandemic in the absence of a comprehensive database of poor people.

To store basic information of all citizens, a Cabinet Division committee in November last year sent a proposal to the Prime Minister's Office for having a separate authority that will provide services relating to National Identity (NID) cards.

However, the proposal has been lying with the PMO for more than four months.

"We are yet to get any feedback from the Prime Minister's Office...", Cabinet Division Additional Secretary Sultan Ahmed, the chief of the committee, told The Daily Star recently.

Sultan said they made the recommendation

so that all vital statistics of the citizens are stored in one platform under a programme titled "Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) of the Cabinet Division".

The move came after the home ministry last year sent a proposal to the PMO, saying all activities regarding NID cards should be handed over to it, said Cabinet Division sources.

In response, the PMO directed the Cabinet Division to submit a report with its views on the matter. And a seven-member committee headed by Sultan was formed.

Now, the NID services are being provided through the "Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEAS)" project under the Election Commission.

Different ministries have developed a number of electronic databases but those

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## EXPERT'S VIEWS



## Should we be worried about India variant?

DR KHONDOKER MEHEDI AKRAM

India is witnessing a devastating second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Hospitals are overwhelmed with patients amidst a nationwide shortage of oxygen supply -- the primary element of Covid-19 treatment. While the country's healthcare system is crumbling, helpless patients are gasping for air and dying with their lungs filled with the new killer variant of the coronavirus.

The magnitude of the current wave, which has yet to reach its peak, dwarfed the first wave that was considered

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## DEATH OF COLLEGE GIRL

## Her diaries hold vital evidence

Say police about the case against Bashundhara MD Sayem Sobhan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six diaries of the college student found dead in a Gulshan flat on Monday contain crucial evidence supporting the allegations against Bashundhara Group Managing Director Sayem Sobhan Anvir of abetting suicide, police said.

"The victim's utter frustration and mental breakdown are reflected in her diaries, which we have seized. Her writings will be important evidence," Sudip Chakrabarty, deputy commissioner (Gulshan division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told reporters yesterday.

Meanwhile, the victim's elder sister, who filed a case with Gulshan Police Station under section 306 of Bangladesh Penal Code on Tuesday, said she received threatening calls from unknown people asking her to withdraw the case against Anvir or suffer the same fate as her sister.

In another development, the accused Bashundhara MD sought anticipatory bail from the High Court. The bail petition has been included in the cause list for hearing today.

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## BUSINESS

## Is FBCCI becoming a puppet organisation?

The business community is deprived of an opportunity to choose their leaders through a participatory election as directors of the FBCCI are picked through consensus among hopefuls, who are often backed by ruling parties. In keeping with the recent trend, all directors have already been elected uncontested in the poll due May 5.

STORY ON B1



## Khaleda's condition stable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who recently tested positive for Covid-19, is physically stable and her lungs are in good condition, said her doctor.

The former prime minister was hospitalised

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## RUSSIAN, CHINESE VACCINES

## Govt now going for coproduction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government approved in principle the local coproduction of Russia's Sputnik V and China's Sinopharm coronavirus vaccines involving Bangladeshi drug makers.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) yesterday approved the proposal made by the health ministry, said Additional Secretary Shahida Akhter of the Cabinet Division told reporters yesterday.

The development came a day after the government authorised the emergency use of Sputnik V and also sought immediate supply from Sinopharm at a meeting with Chinese delegates.

Bangladesh's mass inoculation

programme suffered serious setbacks after the Indian government restricted the export of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine produced by the Serum Institute of India.

Shahida did not explain how the "co-production" will take place.

"The names of the companies were not mentioned. The health minister said several companies in the country are capable of producing the vaccines," said the cabinet official.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) in its next meeting may approve the funds needed for the technology transfer and other steps of the process, she added.

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