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COVID CRISIS IN INDIA

It's a wake-up call for all

WHO warns it can 'happen anywhere' if guards are down too early; India sees record deaths, cases

AGENCIES

The World Health Organization issued a stark warning to nations yesterday, saying that relaxing Covid measures too early could spark a "perfect storm" allowing cases to spiral -- as seen in India.

New infections and deaths are soaring in India, which experts have said can in part be blamed on people's disregard for protective measures and mass gatherings in the nation of 1.3 billion people.

India reported 379,257 new infections and 3,645 new deaths yesterday, health ministry data showed, the highest number of fatalities in a single day since the start of the pandemic. India's total Covid-19 cases passed 18 million yesterday.

The pandemic has claimed at least 3.1 million lives around the world, with India accounting for more than 200,000 fatalities.

The head of WHO Europe said countries should not make the mistake of relaxing restrictions too soon, as India did, to avoid similar new waves of infection.

"When personal protective measures are being relaxed, when there are mass gatherings, when there are more contagious variants and the vaccination coverage is still low this can create a perfect storm in any country," Hans Kluge told reporters yesterday.

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Like other days, Montu Miah along with his van yesterday went to Shantinagar Bazar for transporting goods from one place to another. He got no work at least until around 12:30pm. Exhausted in the heat, he felt drowsy on his van. For people like Montu, the "lockdown" has made it difficult to find work.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

MEDICAL TESTS

Khaleda to stay in hospital for 2 more days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who recently tested positive for Covid-19, needs to stay at the hospital for two more days as all her medical tests are yet to be completed.

AZM Zahid Hossain, Khaleda's physician, yesterday told The Daily Star that her routine medical check-up was due for more than a year now and it would take some time to be completed.

The BNP chairperson was admitted to Evercare Hospital in the capital on Tuesday night. Cardiologist Shahabuddin Talukdar was taking care of her health.

Khaleda's personal physician Zahid said the newly formed 10-member medical board suggested some new tests. A few of those would be conducted on Friday and Saturday.

"The medical board will then review the treatment plan of Khaleda Zia," he said.

The BNP chief has

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Allow public transport right away

Owners urge govt, demand Tk 5,000cr as special incentive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transport owners yesterday urged the government to allow them to resume operations of public transport from today considering the plight of thousands of people involved in the sector.

They also demanded allocation of Tk 5,000 crore as special incentive at a low interest rate for the sector so that they could give salary and bonus to their staffers ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr and repair vehicles.

"We want to resume operations of public transport from tomorrow [today]. We are ready to follow all types of health safety guidelines," Romesh Chandra Ghosh, chairman of Bangladesh Bus-Truck Owners' Association, said at a press conference.

The association, one of the two major platforms of transport owners, organised the press conference at its Gabtoli office in the capital to announce a four-point demand.

Operations of public transport, mainly

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ROAD TO FREEDOM
THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Bangladesh at risk of famine

APRIL 30, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

CYCLONE AFFECTED AREAS FACING STARVATION

About four million people in south-central Bangladesh, ravaged by a cyclone and tidal wave in November 1970,

were facing starvation because the war had halted emergency food distribution, reported the Washington Post.

The officials who said they maintain contact with leaders of the Bangladesh liberation movement said the area hit by the cyclone had gone mostly untouched by the fighting. The area consists of the Ganges River Delta districts of Patuakhali and Barisal and some remote offshore islands in the Bay of Bengal.

The Bangalee officials said 60,000 tonnes of food had been sent to the area before March 26, but another 160,000 tonnes were never sent because the war shut down the ports in Bangladesh and the access roads to the area.

They said no food had been shipped to the victims for the past month also because there was almost no civilian administration in Bangladesh and the army, which handled much of the operation, stopped to concentrate on the fighting, reported the Washington Post.

In Paris, where representatives of 11 nations involved in the relief operations were meeting, it was estimated that as many as 30 million to 60 million of East Pakistan's 74 million inhabitants could starve.

In Washington, officials also said the food distribution had been disrupted and urged the Pakistani government of President Agha

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UTD HOSPITAL FIRE

Pay Tk 25 lakh each to families of 4 victims

SC orders authorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday directed the United Hospital to pay Tk 25 lakh each in initial payment to the families of the four patients killed in a fire at its Covid-19 isolation unit on May 27 last year.

The hospital must pay the families within 30 days of receiving the apex court order, or be accused of contempt of court, the hospital's lawyer Mustafizur Rahman Khan told The Daily Star.

A full bench of the Appellate Division of the SC, led by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, issued the order after hearing the leave to appeal petition filed by the hospital authorities

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Rare tombs from pre-Pharaonic era discovered in Egypt



REUTERS, Cairo

Egyptian archaeologists working on the Nile Delta have uncovered dozens of rare predynastic tombs dating to the period before Egypt's Pharaonic kingdoms first emerged more than 5,000 years ago.

They also found tombs nearby from the later Hyksos period (1650 to 1500 BC), when Western Asian migrants took over the country, putting an end to Egypt's Middle Kingdom.

The findings in the Dakahlia province north of Cairo could shed light on two important transitional periods in ancient Egypt, Egyptologists said.

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Two killed as oil tanker catches fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two crew members of an oil tanker were killed after a fire broke out in the engine room yesterday morning.

Nizam Uddin, 40, and Ruhul Amin Alamgir, 45, were killed when their vessel was at a private jetty on the southern bank of the Karnaphuli in Chattogram. Their three other colleagues were injured.

There was a blast in the engine room of MT Irawati-1 at Super Petro Chemical Jetty around 6:30am. It happened when the crew was unloading its condensate cargo, said Deputy Assistant Director (DAD) Newton Das of Fire Service and Civil Defense, Chattogram.

Three fire engines rushed to the spot to douse the fire.

Three tugboats, including one from Bangladesh Navy, rushed to help in putting out the fire, said Omar Faruk, secretary of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA).

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Several turtles spotted on a tree branch floating in the capital's Gulshan Lake. Turtles are hardly seen in the capital as there are a handful of water bodies remaining. This photo was captured yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

LAST PHASE OF WB ELECTION

TMC to retain power, BJP to gain big

Predict exit polls after millions vote amid Covid 'tsunami'

AGENCIES

Mamata Banerjee is set to retain power in West Bengal with her Trinamool Congress winning 156 of the state's 294 seats, predicted NDTV's poll of exit polls as the marathon eight-phase state assembly elections ended yesterday.

An aggregate of six exit polls predicted that Mamata Banerjee will make it past the half-way mark, enough to win a third straight term. The Bharatiya Janata Party are predicted to win 121 seats.

According to ABP C-Voter exit poll, TMC is predicted to win 152-64 seats, while BJP is given 109-21 seats.

However, Republic TV-CNX poll has predicted that the BJP will get 143 seats in Bengal while the Trinamool Congress will secure 133 seats.

Earlier yesterday, millions voted in the final phase of polling in West Bengal, despite a record-breaking spike in Covid-19 infections and deaths that has devastated the country.

Long queues of voters appeared outside polling booths as temperatures soared.

Many in rural parts of the state failed to observe social distancing rules, with some wearing masks but others hanging them loosely on their chins or from their ears.

Stray incidents of violence were reported from several

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