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Spread of Covid in rural India deepens crisis

Daily cases, deaths break previous records; evidence suggests epidemic moving towards eastern states

AGENCIES

Hopes that India's deadly second wave of Covid-19 was about to peak were swept away yesterday as it posted record daily infections and deaths and as the virus spread from cities to villages across the world's second-most populous nation.

India reported a record 412,262 new cases in the past 24 hours and a record 3,980 deaths. Covid-19 infections have now surged past 21 million, with a total death toll of 230,168, health ministry data show.

Government modelling had forecast a peak in second wave infections by Wednesday.

"This temporarily halts speculations of a peak," Rijo M John, a professor at the Indian Institute of Management in the southern state of Kerala, said on Twitter.

Medical experts say India's actual figures could be five to 10 times the official tallies.

Covid-19 crisis has been most acute in the capital, New Delhi, among other cities, but in rural areas - home to nearly 70% of India's 1.3 billion people - limited public healthcare is posing more challenges.

"The situation has become dangerous in villages," said Suresh Kumar, a field coordinator with Manav Sansadhan Evam Mahila Vikas Sansthan, a human rights charity.

In some villages where the charity works in the north

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After 22 days of bus service suspension, due to movement restrictions enforced to curb Covid transmission, buses started plying within cities and districts across the country yesterday. This photo was captured from Paltan intersection in the capital.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Country sees lowest daily Covid deaths in 39 days

41 die, 1,822 test positive in a day

UNB, Dhaka

Amid the declining trend in Covid-19 infections and fatalities after an alarming surge in April, Bangladesh registered 41 coronavirus-related deaths in 24 hours until yesterday, pushing up the total fatalities to 11,796.

This is the lowest number of coronavirus deaths in the country after March 28 this year. Bangladesh saw 35 deaths on March 28.

However, 1,822 new cases were detected during the period after the test of 21,585 samples.

The mortality rate remained static at 1.53 percent, said the Directorate General of Health Services in a handout.

The number of coronavirus-related deaths came down to 50 after over a month on Wednesday as the country saw 50 deaths on April 1 and it had kept rising since then.

The daily infection rate fell to 8.44 percent from Wednesday's 8.59 percent.

Mamata takes centre stage

Becomes focus of opposition parties to unitedly stop BJP juggernaut in 2024 polls

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, from NEW DELHI



It may be too early to tell, but the signs seem promising for Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee.

TMC's landslide victory in the West Bengal assembly elections over the Bharatiya Janata Party, helmed by Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, is propelling Mamata to becoming the focal point of opposition parties' united effort to halt the BJP in the 2024 general elections.

An array of senior Congress leaders, who had shot off a letter to party President Sonia Gandhi last year seeking organisational changes after its abject defeat in the 2019 parliamentary polls, have been gushing over Mamata's leadership since the Bengal poll results came out on May 2.

Among those leaders are Ghulam Nabi Azad who termed Mamata as the "Lioness of the East" for fighting and winning against all odds. In a tweet, Kapil Sibal

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ROAD TO FREEDOM THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Nixon's letter to Yahya

MAY 7, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL US President Richard Nixon in a letter issued today to Pakistan President Yahya Khan expressed his concern over the loss of life and human suffering in East Pakistan. However, he sympathised with Yahya and said, "I understand the anguish you must have felt in making the difficult decisions you have faced."



Nixon further said, "We look forward to an early renewal of your national development effort and of normal economic activity throughout Pakistan. We especially hope for the restoration of internal communications in East Pakistan to forestall food shortages, and we are prepared to support international humanitarian relief there."

The letter concluded, "It is to no one's advantage to permit the situation in East Pakistan to lead to an internationalization of the situation. Foreign involvement could create new problems and compound the difficulty of securing an ultimate settlement. We have been in touch with the Government of India and have discussed the implications of the present situation. We have stressed the need for restraint."

INDIA'S POSITION ON RECOGNITION OF BANGLADESH Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi reportedly told opposition leaders today that her government wanted to watch developments for a while before deciding whether to recognise the government proclaimed by the Bangalee independence movement in Bangladesh.

Official sources reported that all the opposition leaders with the

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Singer Anup Bhattacharya no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Freedom fighter and Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra artiste Anup Bhattacharya passed away at a city hospital around 7:30pm yesterday. He was 77.



His son-in-law Sudip Chakroborthy told The Daily Star that he got admitted to the capital's Asgar Ali Hospital with age-related complications before he breathed his last.

The legendary artiste had long suffered from lung problems, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

Sudip said, "His only regret was that he did not get his due respect from the authorities regarding his Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra artiste status. Even two days ago, he expressed his grief over the issue."

Born in Sylhet's Zakiganj, Anup's musical

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The earliest known human burial discovered in Africa



AFP, Paris

A child no older than three laid to rest sideways in an earthen grave 78,000 years ago, legs carefully tucked up against its tiny chest, is the earliest known human burial in Africa, researchers reported Wednesday.

The sunken pit, in a cave complex along the coast of Kenya, was bereft of ornaments, offerings or ochre-coloured clay carvings found in the region's more recent Stone Age graves, they detailed in the journal Nature.

But "Mtoto" -- Swahili for "child" -- had been

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Hasina greets Mamata over polls victory

To work together to fight Covid pandemic

UNB, DHAKA

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina congratulated Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee after she was sworn in as the chief minister of West Bengal for a third straight term.

"The huge victory of Trinamool Congress in the assembly election of 2021 is a reflection of deep-rooted trust of West Bengal people in you," she said in a message sent to Mamata on Wednesday.

Hasina wished overall development and continued progress of the West Bengal people under the able leadership of Mamata.

She expressed optimism that the relations between Bangladesh and West Bengal will deepen further in future in order to build a prosperous future for the people of two Bengals.

"At this critical time of the global coronavirus

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A common green magpie sitting on a tree branch after taking a dip in a small pond in the Satchhari National Park in Habiganj's Chunarughat. This beautiful bird builds nests in trees and large shrubs.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ASKER IBNE FIROZ



COVID VACCINE PATENT WAIVER

World powers back US plan

WHO hails 'historic' move as drugmakers push back

AGENCIES

The United States threw its weight behind a waiver on patent protections for Covid-19 vaccines as the GAVI vaccine alliance urged Washington to help manufacturers transfer know-how to boost global production.

Rich nations have faced accusations of hoarding shots while poor countries struggle to get inoculation programs off the ground, with the virus surging across the developing world in contrast to the easing of restrictions in Europe and the United States.

Under intense pressure to ease protections for vaccine manufacturers, Washington's Trade Representative Katherine Tai said Wednesday the country "supports the waiver of those protections for Covid-19 vaccines."

"The extraordinary circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic call for extraordinary measures," she said in a statement.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus praised the "historic" move and said it marked "a monumental moment in the fight against Covid-19".

Meanwhile, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen -- who has previously voiced reluctance to waive patents -- said yesterday the bloc was ready to discuss the US proposal.

EU governments lined up to weigh in, with French President Emmanuel Macron saying he was "absolutely in favour" of a global waiver, while Germany said it was open to discussing the proposal.

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