



I'm trying my own thing, says pacer Mustafizur Rahman in an interview with The Daily Star
SEE PAGE 11



"If the entire world doesn't do more, the world won't be vaccinated until 2024."
US TOP DIPLOMAT ANTONY BLINKEN
ON COVID VACCINATION



"Government of India's failures have made another devastating national lockdown almost inevitable."
INDIA'S OPPOSITION LEADER RAHUL GANDHI
ON COVID-19 CRISIS



"I think that's really because we have been focusing, as a government, on our priorities, the people's priorities, and bouncing back from the pandemic as much as we can."
UK PRIME MINISTER BORIS JOHNSON AFTER WINNING OPPOSITION STRONGHOLD

Mad rush home as curbs eased

With vehicles plying inside districts, thousands flock to villages ahead of Eid despite govt order not to leave their places

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

"Where will you go? Up to the [Paturia ferry] ghat or further?" "Do you need a car or a microbus?" "You can go alone or share it with other passengers."

Transport workers and car rental service providers hurled such queries and "offers" at Eid holidaymakers who poured into Gabtoli bus terminal to leave the city yesterday, the last weekend before the festival.

The government suspended inter-district public transport and asked all to stay at their present location to check the spread of Covid-19, but the move hardly stopped desperate home-goers from taking the journey. They left the capital by any means, oblivious to maintaining physical distancing.

The ferry terminals at Shimulia and Paturia continued to see heavy rush of passengers. In fact, the rush got so big that some ferries even had to carry only people, leaving vehicles behind.

All these fueled the fear of experts who warned that the Covid-19 situation in the country, which is battling the second wave of the pandemic, could worsen if the health safety rules were not followed properly.

Eid will be celebrated in around a week. Yesterday, homebound people thronged the capital's inter-district bus terminals in Gabtoli and Sayedabad. Those who could afford left the city by renting cars and microbuses. Others changed vehicles at multiple places and advanced towards their destinations.

Buses are running only inside districts.

Low-income people boarded local transport like human haulier and CNG-run three wheelers to reach the ferry ghats after leaving the exit points of the city.

This cost them more money and time.

Shihab Uddin, 20, along with four other construction workers, came to the capital from Chattogram's Patenga by renting a car for Tk 5,000. At Gabtoli, they were looking for a ride to go home in Jashore.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



HEADING HOME IGNORING SAFETY RULES

Crammed with homebound passengers, a ferry leaves Shimulia ferry terminal in Munshiganj yesterday morning. Only a few vehicles could board the ferry due to a rush of Eid holidaymakers who did not bother about maintaining health safety rules. *Bottom left*, people from Savar and adjacent areas walk to Gabtoli bus terminal in the capital to catch vehicles to Jatrabari and other exit points of the capital. *Bottom right*, passengers walk towards Paturia ferry terminal in Manikganj.

PHOTO: STAR

Russia offers Sputnik V jabs for \$9.95 each

Dhaka seeks price cut thru' negotiation

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Russia has offered Bangladesh the Sputnik V vaccine at a rate of \$9.95 for each dose.

Although a procurement agreement is yet to be signed between the two countries, the Bangladesh government wrote to the Russian authority asking them to reduce the price as it seemed to be high, said officials.

The Russian government sent a proposal early last week. After analysing the proposal, the Bangladesh government replied saying the price should be negotiated further.

"We have proposed for price negotiations. But the price of the double dose of Sputnik V is less than the single dose of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines," a top

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Khaleda improving

Family hopes for sending her abroad once she is more stable and legal issues are settled

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's doctors said she can be taken abroad once she becomes consistently stable.

With oxygen support, her oxygen saturation level remains 100 percent and she needs one litre of oxygen an hour, said a doctor involved with Khaleda's treatment.

The doctor, who is in a 10-member medical board, said the former prime minister's oxygen level fluctuates without oxygen support, but the dependency has decreased.

"We advised the family members to take madam [Khaleda] abroad once she gains more stability," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Her blood pressure was 120/80 at 5:00 pm yesterday when her respiratory rate was 15-20 per minute.

Doctors said the improvement should continue in order for her to be able to fly.

Family sources said Khaleda's aide Fatema, her brother Shamim Iskandar and his wife will accompany her if the government clears the hurdles to her flight abroad.

She will be taken either to London, the UAE, Singapore or Thailand.

"Once we get the passport, we will apply for a UK visa.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



COVID PANDEMIC

One in every 10 samples tests positive in 24 hours

Shows DGHS data

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One in every 10 samples tested Covid-19 positive in the country in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

Another 1,682 positive cases were recorded during the period.

Of each 100 patients, 1.54 people died from the deadly virus and 91.37 recovered, said a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services.

The country reported its first coronavirus cases on March 8 last year. In the last 14 months, the total number of positive cases reached 770,842.

The current positivity rate is 9.89 percent, while the total positivity rate stands at 13.77 percent.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

EX-RU VC'S TENURE

Recruitment rules violated freely

Financial activities got more importance than improving quality of education

ANWAR ALI with ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Thursday's chaos on Rajshahi University campus can be attributable to the lack of effective steps after a government report mentioned that bribery, questionable recruitment and financial irregularities were rampant in the administration when Prof Abdus Sobhan was the vice chancellor.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) sent the report containing the observations to the Ministry of Education, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in October last year, but the only notable step taken was an embargo on new recruitment.

However, on Thursday, his last work day, Prof Sobhan recruited at least 137 teachers and employees that created disappointment in two pro-government student groups who then clashed over the recruitment.

The education ministry termed Thursday's recruitments illegal. According to records, 52 teachers and 191 other employees were recruited in the four-year tenure of Prof Sobhan.

Several senior teachers of the university said the situation was created due to gross violation of the Rajshahi University Act 1973, which makes it mandatory to appoint the VC from a panel of three individuals nominated by the Senate.

"Instead of following the rules, VCs are being appointed through executive orders," Prof Abu Naser Md Wahid told The Daily Star.

"Such orders are the result of serious lobbies by individuals affiliated to

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

India's Covid surge to peak in coming days

Predict Modi's advisers; WHO gives approval to Sinopharm vaccine

AGENCIES

A mathematical model prepared by advisers to Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggests India's coronavirus outbreak could peak in the coming days, but the group's projections have been changing and were wrong last month.

The projection comes as the World Health Organization yesterday approved China's state-owned drugmaker Sinopharm's vaccine for emergency use, a boost to Beijing's push for a big role in inoculating the world.

The vaccine, one of two main Chinese coronavirus vaccines that collectively have already been given to hundreds of millions of people in China and elsewhere, is the first developed by a non-Western country to win WHO backing. It is also the first time the WHO has given emergency use approval to a Chinese vaccine for any infectious disease.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



Choked by encroachment, this channel of the Buriganga near Fatulla launch terminal in Narayanganj has become very risky for navigation of vessels. Dozens of lives were lost in riverine accidents in the area. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Narrow Buriganga bend turns deadly

Crucial waterway near Dhaka increasingly accident-prone as channel narrowed amid riverbank grabbing, unregulated anchoring of vessels

TARUN SARKAR

A narrow V-shaped bend in the Buriganga river, one of the major channels of the country's inland waterways communications, has increasingly become an accident-prone zone in recent years.

Frequent riverine accidents of passenger and cargo vessels in this zone, near Narayanganj's Fatullah area, have claimed dozens of lives over the last couple of years.

Passengers and water transport operators said the bend has narrowed over the years due to rampant grabbing of the riverbanks.

At the same time, the number of water transport is increasing day by day and almost all vessels from the capital bound for the southern districts have to pass through the bend.

Moreover, many vessels are kept anchored at the channel and hundreds of sand-laden cargo vessels ply the channel round the clock.

These factors have made the river's bend an accident-prone zone, said Nurul Haque, general secretary of the Bangladesh Cargo Vessel Owners Association.

Environmentalists and vessel operators have demanded widening of the bend by excavating the river banks, after evicting illegal structures.

This narrow point borders Dhaka and

Narayanganj districts with Fatullah area of Narayanganj Sadar upazila on the eastern side of the river and Dhaka's Keraniganj upazila to the west.

The Buriganga river from Dhaka's Kamrangirchar area goes straight via Sadarghat and the Postogola area. As the river approaches Fatullah, it takes a V-shaped bend and flows in the south-western direction, eventually connecting with the Dhaleshwari river.

This turning point is the narrowest portion of the waterways between Dhaka and Narayanganj -- as a result, accidents have become commonplace and sometimes even fatal.

MULTIPLE ACCIDENTS IN LAST THREE YEARS

A collision between passenger vessels Kirtankhola-10 and MV Farhan-10 in January this year, and two accidents involving launches and sand-laden vessels in March last year took place at this point.

Also, at least three passengers died when a sand-carrying vessel sank after collision with a passenger vessel on January 3 last year.

Similar collisions between passenger vessels and sand-laden cargo vessels took place on April 19 and March 10 in 2019 and on January 12, 2018.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5