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Indian variants are here now

Double-mutant strain that spreads fast is one of them; experts urge strictest measures right away

STAR REPORT

The detection of an Indian variant of the coronavirus and a its subtype called double-mutant in Bangladesh is a worrying sign, especially since the country is just recovering from the second wave of Covid-19.

The strain of the virus that has overwhelmed India's hospitals might jeopardise the healthcare system in Bangladesh unless the strictest measures are taken right now, health experts said.

Officials of the Directorate General of Health Services yesterday told reporters that they detected six cases of the Indian variant, including some with the double-mutant subtype.

Besides, a genome sequencing centre at Jashore Science and Technology University (ISTU) found two other cases of the Indian variant in individuals who recently travelled back from India.

Meanwhile, the government extended the closure of borders with India for 14 more days, UNB reports.

Conditions of the travel ban that has

been in effect since April 26 will remain unchanged, said Mashfee Binte Shams, secretary (east) at the foreign ministry.

The government earlier closed the border with India for 14 days with on April 26. Freight operations were exempt from the ban.

Bangladeshis in India with visas valid for less than 15 days can come back only through Benapole, Akhaura and Burimari after taking permission from Bangladesh Missions in New Delhi, Kolkata, and Agartala given that they test negative for coronavirus in a PCR machine in less than 72 hours before entering Bangladesh.

"The Indian variant of coronavirus was detected in a sample test at Evercare Hospital in Dhaka. It has been published on Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data," UNB quoted ASM Alamgir, chief scientific officer of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), as saying.

At the daily briefing, Nasima Sultana, additional director general of the DGHS, said, "We are concerned about the Indian

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Too many people crowd this pontoon at Shimula ferry terminal yesterday. Many, in their desperation to get home for Eid, wades water, climbs ropes, and forgets to wear masks to board one of the few ferries that took people across the Padma yesterday. Unable to manage the surge of people, the authorities had to run a few ferries which they had suspended earlier.

PHOTO: STAR

RETURNING MIGRANTS

Harsh realities bite at home

Survey finds 77pc struggled to get work amid pandemic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 77 percent local and international migrant workers, who returned home, struggled to find work between April and November last year due to the pandemic, says a new survey report.

Among the migrant households with returnees, 61 percent had at least one member who lost a job or earning opportunity, says the report, titled "Demographic and Socio-economic Changes Induced by the Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges of New Circumstances".

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Homegoers would stop at nothing

MUNTAKIM SAAD AND SHAHEEN MOLLAH

People are heading home for Eid in droves.

Despite the pandemic, the subsequent restrictions on movement, officials made to stay at their work stations, and suspension of inter-district public transport, people in their thousands left for their village homes yesterday.

They left the cities on private and small vehicles, ignoring the prime minister's request to celebrate Eid at where they are to help check the spread of Covid-19.

The authorities even halted operations of two ferry services on the Padma early yesterday but the surge of people defying health safety guidelines could not be stopped.

They waited for hours under the scorching sun at the ferry terminals and on roads, took detours, changed vehicles multiple times, and many even walked long distances to get home.

Even the ferries had to be run in the face of the rush yesterday.

This happened the very day Bangladeshis came to know that the highly contagious Indian variant of Covid-19 is already here.

Health experts said the Covid situation in Bangladesh could worsen due to the increased public movement centring Eid. They had warned that the situation could turn dangerous once the India variant made its way here.

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Khaleda now Covid-19 negative

Her oxygen support dependency decreases
MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

BNP

Chairperson

Khaleda

Zia tested

negative for

Covid-19 last

night and

her condition improved

slightly.

"Madam's [Khaleda]

coronavirus test came

negative tonight," hospital

sources told The Daily Star.

Even though her health

condition has slightly

improved, fluids were being



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SHADHINOTA STAMBHA PROJECT

Tree-felling wasn't part of original plan

HELEMUL ALAM

The primary design of the Shadhinota Stambha (third phase) in Suhrawardy Udyan had no provision for cutting down trees but many were chopped down for walkways that were included in the design later, said architects involved in the project.

Many features, like underground car park, food stalls, public toilets, and walkways, were redesigned in the third phase violating the master plan and without consulting the designers who prepared the master plan, they added.

Green activists and different social organisations recently staged

demonstrations protesting felling of trees in Suhrawardy Udyan after the incident hit the headlines.

A Department of Architecture architect, who was involved in the third phase project, also admitted that there was no provision for cutting down trees in the primary design.

Architect Merina Tabassum, one of the master planners, said their firm worked for the first two phases of the project since 1997.

Landscaping was a major part of the master plan, she said, adding that they prepared the landscaping design under

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RELATED STORY ON PAGE 3

An elderly labourer takes an afternoon nap in the shade of an under construction flyover in the capital's Mirpur DOHS. The spell of scorching heat that has been sweeping over most parts of the country has been taking a toll on the people who are old, less affluent and rely on manual labour to earn their livelihoods.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

the BUSINESS

25pc garment factories shed jobs despite receiving stimulus: CPD

Twenty-five per cent of garment factories that received loans from the taxpayer-backed stimulus package retrenched workers in a breach of conditions, according to a study of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). The fund was given on the condition that factories could not lay off workers. The average income for workers declined by 37 per cent. It was 39.9 per cent for the unemployed female workers, the survey found.

STORY ON B1

He did what he fought all his life

Joining of those recruited last day suspended

ANWAR ALI AND ARAFAT RAHMAN

Rajshahi University's Prof Abdus Sobhan spent a good many years fighting for educational causes and against unlawful recruitment and corruption by the university authorities, and he even had to go to jail.

But when he became the vice-chancellor, he went back on all his ideals.

On his final day of second term in office Thursday, he required police protection when a protest was raging on campus against his alleged misdeeds.

The same day Sobhan had appointed at least 137 teachers and staffers, ignoring recruitment rules.

Later in the evening, the education ministry announced the recruitments illegal. It also formed a four-member committee to identify those involved in the hiring process.

The committee members flew to Rajshahi yesterday and began the investigation.

In another development yesterday, RU registrar Prof Abdus Salam issued an office order suspending the recruitment processes and the joining of those recruited on the last



day of Sobhan until the ministerial probe committee comes up with its findings.

Born in 1953, Sobhan studied applied physics and electronics at Rajshahi University until 1975 and started teaching at the same university in 1979. He completed his PhD at the University of Newcastle in Australia in 1992 and became a professor at RU in 1997.

He was general secretary of RU Teachers Association in 2000, and convenor of the Progressive Teachers Association for two years till 2008.

During the BNP-Jamaat rule, Sobhan and others raised their voices against illegal recruitments and irregularities, especially against the recruitment of 544 employees.

In 2007, he was at the forefront of the movement when the administration recruited 200 staffers in three days without budgetary allocations and moved to recruit 800 others in exchange for bribe.

The Daily Star then quoted Sobhan as saying, "The instances of cashing in on the recruitment are alarming and the controversial

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Bangladesh Bank
Head Office
Dhaka



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For further queries, please contact

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