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## Khaleda can't go abroad

Law ministry says; highest authority still considering family's plea positively: sources

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has turned down the plea from Khaleda Zia's family for allowing her to go abroad for better treatment, citing legal grounds.

"According to the existing law, there is no scope for granting the application to let BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia go abroad," Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal told reporters yesterday.

The law ministry gave this opinion after reviewing for the second time Section-401 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) under which Khaleda's jail sentence was suspended, he pointed out.

The home boss had earlier said the government would actively consider the plea on humanitarian grounds.

"The law ministry has informed us that Khaleda Zia cannot go abroad unless her sentence is commuted. In the light of this, the application of Khaleda Zia's family will not be granted," Asaduzzaman said at his



Secretariat office yesterday. He also said they would soon inform the BNP chief's family of their decision.

The minister mentioned that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave Khaleda the opportunity to receive treatment at home at her convenience following suspension of her sentence on humanitarian grounds.

Khaleda later got infected with Covid-19 and was admitted to Evercare Hospital in the capital, he said.

Her brother Shamim Eskander then made a request for letting her go abroad for better treatment. "We sent the application to the law ministry for its opinion," he added.

Sources close to the top brass of the government said that though the law ministry rejected the request, the highest authority is still considering it positively on humanitarian grounds.

There is still a chance that the government

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Workers putting the finishing touches on the tracks at the Uttara North metro rail station in the capital. Officials are planning to conduct a test run of the country's first metro rail service -- the Mass Rapid Transit-6 -- which will stretch from this station in the capital's north to Motijheel in the south. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

## Don't move, stay at your places

PM again asks people

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the countrymen not to put their near and dear ones' lives under threat by rushing to village homes to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr.

"I know people are rushing towards villages on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr. You may come in contact with the coronavirus on the ferry or in the vehicle on your way as you don't know who is infected with the virus and you bring it to your family, father-mother, grandfather-grandmother, brother-sister, and others. You can infect them and put their lives at risk," she said.

She simultaneously called for taking precautionary measures to be protected from the variant found in a neighbouring country that claims lives frequently.

The prime minister was addressing a function to distribute plot allotment letters to 1,440 remaining main inhabitants and general people affected by the Purbachal New Town Project held at the Bangabandhu International

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INDIAN VARIANTS HERE

## Sneaked in thru' lax enforcement

8 India returnees found infected with double-mutant variant; whereabouts of 128 still unknown

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The recent arrival of the double mutant Indian Covid-19 variant in Bangladesh is due to the lack of strict enforcement of institutional quarantine for those returning from India.

The government has found eight people infected with the Indian variant and all of them have entered the country through the Benapole land port.

Since April 26, around 2,500 Bangladeshis have entered through the busy port with Covid-19 certificates, according to the Jessore Civil Surgeon office.

Of them, 128 went to different places of the country including Dhaka for medical treatment without completing mandatory

14-day quarantine.

"Even if one carries a negative certificate, the person can be Covid-19 positive anytime. That's why a 14-day quarantine is recommended," Dr Sheikh Abu Hanif, civil surgeon of Jessore, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) on Saturday disclosed that it has found Indian variant in eight people, of which four are in Dhaka.

Soon after the announcement, the government extended the closure of borders with India for 14 more days since April 26.

Health officials said those who returned from India were supposed to stay in institutional quarantine. Instead, some of

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## Covid death toll nears 12k

56 more die, 1,386 infected

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh reported 56 more coronavirus-related deaths and 1,386 new cases in 24 hours until yesterday morning.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said the latest fatalities took the country's death toll to 11,934 while the mortality rate remained static at 1.54 percent.

Besides, the DGHS said, the new cases were detected after testing 16,915 samples, pushing up the total case count to 773,513. Bangladesh has so far carried out 5,630,894 tests.

After a massive upsurge, the number of daily cases fell below 2,000 since May

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## Metro rail test run likely this month

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The authorities may begin a test run of the country's first metro rail service later this month.

The test will on the basic functions of the systems. After this test, the authorities will operate the trains between four to five stations and then is expected to formally launch the service next year, they said.

Officials were asked to make preparations for the test run by May 24. Road Transports and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader is expected to announce a date on Tuesday.

The minister is scheduled to visit the metro rail depot at the capital's Diabari to see in person the first metro train brought from Japan last month.

During a visit to the project site in Uttara, particularly the Uttara North and Uttara Centre stations on Saturday, this correspondent saw several hundred workers making preparation for the test run.

Mass Rapid Transit Line-6 or MRT-6, the country's first metro rail, is being built from the capital's Uttara third phase to Motijheel at a cost of Tk 22,000 crore.

Once complete, the metro train will be able to carry

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People crowd on the sidewalk of the capital's Gabtoli bridge in their rush to go back to their home districts yesterday. Amid such a crowd there is no space for social distancing, while there are other risks, such as those taken by the passengers on the back of the small pickup truck who can barely find a place to sit.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Virus scare lost in home rush

Home-goers ignore warning, desperate to leave city; Eid shoppers crowd malls

MUNTAKIM SAAD AND SHAHEEN MOLLAH

As Eid draws nearer, people desperate to go back to their home districts have continued to leave Dhaka despite all difficulties and while ignoring the restrictions the government imposed to curb the spread of Covid-19.

They waited for hours under the scorching sun at ferry terminals and on roads. They resorted to detours and changing vehicles multiple times to go home.

Some jumped on trucks, pickups and many even walked long distances to get home.

They left the capital by any means, disregarding physical

distancing, ignoring the prime minister's request to celebrate Eid where they are to help check the spread of Covid-19.

This rush has been continuing for the last three days.

Authorities have even suspended daytime ferries and deployed BGB troops, but the surge could not be stopped. Some even tried to cross the Padma on trawlers and small boats.

Even as people faced extreme difficulties trying to go to their home districts, in the capital shopping centres and roads were crowded with shoppers and vehicles ahead of Eid amid the "lockdown".

The Eid shopping rush is going

on in the backdrop of news that the highly contagious Indian variants of Covid-19 have reached the country.

Health experts said the Covid-19 situation in Bangladesh could worsen due to the increased public movement centring Eid. They had earlier warned that the situation could turn more dangerous once the India variant made its way here.

**RUSH CONTINUES**  
Like the previous two days, people in their thousands thronged the capital's inter-district bus terminals in Gabtoli and Sayedabad yesterday.

From Gabtoli, many went to Amin Bazar on foot or on auto-rickshaws to take a bus and other

transport. There, transport workers and car rental service providers were calling for passengers and negotiating deals.

Many passengers went to Paturia ferry terminal in Manikganj or to Chandra in Gazipur by bus to avail other modes of transport that would take them closer to their homes in the north and south of the country.

Many who could afford it rented vehicles. Others changed vehicles multiple times to go to their destinations. Motorcyclists were seen carrying two passengers on long journeys.

Microbuses with 10-12 people

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