

POST-COUP CRISIS IN MYANMAR
Local militia opposed to junta retreat from the town of Mindat after days of assault
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The Daily Star



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"Is Israel above all international laws?"
INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING MINISTER HASAN MAHMUD OVER ISRAEL'S ATTACK ON PALESTINIANS



"This must not become a forgotten crisis."
UNHCR SPOKESPERSON ANDREJ MAHECIC ABOUT ROHINGYA CRISIS



"Deeply disturbed by the destruction... of a high-rise building in Gaza City that housed the offices of several international media organizations."
UN CHIEF ANTONIO GUTERRES



Rescuers bring out a girl alive from rubble of a house destroyed by Israeli air strikes, in Gaza City, yesterday. Inset, a tower housing AP, Al Jazeera offices collapses after Israeli missile strikes in Gaza city, on Saturday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Grimmer crisis on the horizon

Warn experts citing arrival of deadly variants, lowering of guard against Covid-19

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

With the guard against Covid-19 lowered, health officials and experts fear that the country is heading towards a grimmer health crisis.

The relaxation of lockdown, public disregard for social distancing and uncertainty over vaccination have made the situation volatile as all four Covid variants of global concern have already made their way into Bangladesh. Those include the B.1.617 variant, which is ravaging neighbouring India and spreading fast in other parts of the globe.

Prior to the Eid-ul-Fitr, the government relaxed the lockdown to create space for economic activities. Though it suspended public transport to stop people from travelling millions left big cities, including the capital, for their village homes to celebrate the Eid, flouting the health safety guidelines.

Only 2 percent of the country's 160 million people have so far got the double-dose of AstraZeneca vaccine while less than 4 percent got the first shot.

Due to a crisis of the vaccine, the authorities have suspended administering the first dose. Around 14 lakh people, who got the first shot, are now in uncertainty over getting the second one.

Health officials say there is a shortage of more than 14 lakh doses for administering the second shot to those who have already got the first jab. Vaccines are crucial in the fight against Covid as those reduce the mortality rate.

As of yesterday, a total of 36,51,153 people got both the first and second jabs while 58,19,912 people got the first shot.

Amid uncertainty over vaccines, there is no alternative to wearing face masks, using hand sanitizer and following the social distancing rules to avoid a dreadful situation like the one India and Nepal are facing now, health experts cautioned.

Md Sayedur Rahman, chairman of pharmacology department at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), said the country's healthcare facilities could come under pressure again as infections may surge after a couple of weeks.

"We must prepare right now in case such a situation arises."

Currently, there are 1,069 ICU and 12,059 general beds dedicated for Covid patients across the country, according to

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OFFICE DESTRUCTION AP 'shocked, horrified'
Al Jazeera vows not to be silenced
AFP

Deaths mount in Gaza

Israeli strikes kill 42 more in Palestinian enclave pushing death toll to 192, including 58 children

The Associated Press and Al Jazeera have vowed not to be silenced and expressed 'shock' after an Israeli airstrike destroyed a building housing the news agencies' Gaza offices and those of other international news media.

"This is an incredibly disturbing development. We narrowly avoided a terrible loss of life," AP President and CEO Gary Pruitt said in a statement about the attack on the building on Saturday.

A dozen AP journalists and freelancers had been in the building but were able to evacuate, Pruitt said.

The White House, which has kept a relatively low profile on the Israeli-Palestinian flareup, said

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AGENCIES

Israeli strikes killed 42 Palestinians, including at least 14 children, in the Gaza Strip yesterday, the worst reported daily death toll yet in the week-long clashes, as the UN Security Council prepared to meet amid global alarm at the escalating conflict.

The heaviest fighting since 2014, sparked by unrest in Jerusalem, saw the rivals again trade heavy fire, with the death toll rising to 192 in the crowded coastal enclave of Gaza since Monday and at 10 in Israel, according to authorities on either side.

With no sign of an end to the worst outbreak of Israeli-Palestinian violence in years the United Nations Security Council was due to meet later yesterday to discuss the hostilities.

Israel yesterday said it had in the past 24 hours struck over 90 targets across Gaza, where the destruction of a

12-storey building on Saturday housing news media organisations sparked an international outcry.

Israeli defence officials said the building housed not only news bureaus but offices of Hamas militants. US, Canada have criticized the strike.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said late on Saturday that Israel was "still in the midst of this operation, it is still not over and this operation will continue as long as necessary."

In Gaza, emergency teams worked to pull out bodies from vast piles of smoking rubble and toppled buildings, as relatives wailed in horror and grief.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was "dismayed" by civilian casualties in Gaza and "deeply disturbed" by Israel's strike on Saturday on the tower housing the Associated Press and Al Jazeera bureaus, a spokesman said.

Israel's army said that about 3,000

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- Netanyahu says Israeli offensive to continue as long as necessary
- Biden expresses 'strong support' for Israel's right to defend itself against rocket attacks
- US, Canada call for protecting journalists after Israeli airstrike flattens Gaza building hosting AP, Al Jazeera
- UN chief 'dismayed', 'disturbed' by Israel strikes on Gaza
- Thousands rally in Americas, Europe in solidarity with Palestinians

MAD RUSH BACK Virus scare takes back seat again

STAR REPORT

Thousands of people are returning to Dhaka from their homes after the Eid holidays as government and private offices reopened yesterday.

Health experts have been expressing concerns that the people travelling cross-country en masse will cause a sharp spike in the number of new cases of Covid-19.

The Directorate General of Health Services yesterday urged people who left Dhaka ahead of the Eid last week to return after 14 days. The detection of a deadlier Indian variant of the coronavirus in Bangladesh has also raised serious concerns in recent days.

Thousands of people from the southern districts flocked to ferry terminals yesterday to reach the capital, crossing the Padma river after the three-day holidays.

The travellers didn't have to wait for long, as 18 ferries operated between Shimulia and Banglabazar, 16 between Paturia and Daulatdia, and four between Aricha and Kazirhat.

Crowding was inevitable on the ferries and many didn't wear any face covering let alone maintain social distance.

Telecommunications and ICT Minister Mustafa Jabbar said at least 10,645,697 mobile phone subscribers travelled out of Dhaka between May 4 and May 15. Yesterday, 412,763 returned to the capital.

On Wednesday, five people died in stampedes and

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'Lockdown' extended till May 23

Expert fear things could turn in last of month
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has extended the ongoing countrywide restrictions on movement and inter-district public transport until May 23 to contain the spread of Covid-19.

Even as infection and death numbers have been declining following the second wave of the virus, the recent detection of an Indian variant and its sub-type, called double-mutant, has caused concern especially as hundreds of thousands travelled within the country to celebrate Eid last week.

Experts fear that the country may experience the impact of the Eid rush from the last week of May.

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MITU MURDER Babul Akter now shown arrested

Accused in case filed by victim's father

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

Former superintendent of police Babul Akter was shown arrested in a case filed last Wednesday over his wife Mahmuda Khanam Mitu's murder in Chattogram in 2016.

Having filed the first case over the murder in 2016 himself, Babul was in a five-day remand in connection with the second murder case, filed by Mitu's father Mosharraf Hossain, in which the former SP was made accused.

Inspector Santosh Kumar Chakma, the investigation officer (IO) of the case, told The Daily Star that Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) will collect information about a woman with whom Babul was said to have an extramarital affair, according to the case filed by Mitu's father.

Babul's five-day remand ended yesterday and he will be produced before a court today, said PBI sources.

Talking to The Daily Star, Inspector Santosh Kumar Chakma said, "We interrogated him about both previous and newly filed case statements, his father-in-law's allegation and some information which surfaced from depositions of witnesses."

"He [Babul] provided some important information to us and we are verifying it," said the IO.

PBI officials have said they were trying to identify the motive behind the gruesome murder but, as Babul is a

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Hundreds of people and a few vehicles disembarking from a ferry that brought them from Bangla Bazar terminal to Munshiganj's Shimulia terminal yesterday afternoon. After spending Eid at their home districts, people are returning to the capital. A large portion of them are not wearing masks amid fears of another Covid-19 spike in the country.

PHOTO: SAJJAD HOSSAIN

WHAT YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

US TAKES NOTE OF CHINESE ENVOY'S COMMENT ON QUAD AND BANGLADESH
The US has taken note of the statement of Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming that Dhaka's relations with Beijing will "substantially get damaged" if it joined Quad, a US-led initiative meant to ensure free and open Indo-Pacific, said Ned Price, US State Department Spokesman, in a media briefing on May 12.

HEFAJAT MAYHEM: EX-JAMAAT MP SHAH JAHAN ON 3-DAY REMAND
Jamaat-e-Islami leader Shah Jahan Chowdhury, also former lawmaker of Chattogram-15, from Satkania upazila of Chattogram has been placed on a three-day remand in a case filed with Hathazari Police Station over Hehajate-Islam's mayhem on March 26.

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