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Gaza 'hell on earth' for children

Says UN chief as Israel, Hamas continue to trade heavy fire; ceasefire efforts gather pace

AGENCIES

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres yesterday described Gaza as "hell on earth" for children, appealing to Israel for rapid and unhindered aid access and telling the 193-member General Assembly he would launch an appeal for humanitarian funding.

Diplomatic efforts toward a ceasefire in the Gaza war gathered pace yesterday amid a worsening humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian territory, but fighting between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas continued.

The 193-member UN General Assembly was scheduled to meet later yesterday to discuss the renewed violence, but no action was expected.

"If there is a hell on earth, it is the lives of children in Gaza today," said Guterres, adding that he would launch a full humanitarian appeal for funding as soon as possible.

"The hostilities have caused serious damage to vital civilian infrastructure in Gaza, including roads and electricity lines, contributing to a humanitarian emergency. Crossings into Gaza have been closed and power shortages are affecting water supplies," Guterres added.

Guterres called for an immediate ceasefire and urged Israel's military to exercise maximum restraint and Hamas

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A woman and her little daughter winnowing paddy in the capital's Beribandh area. Boro paddy is taken to Beribandh area after it is harvested from different villages in Savar. A female worker earns about Tk 600 a day for winnowing the paddy.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

36 more die, 1,457 get Covid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of new Covid-19 cases dropped slightly as the health directorate yesterday reported 1,457 cases, including three Indian returnees in Jashore.

Besides, a Covid-19 patient, who returned from India recently, died in Chuadanga yesterday.

With this, the total number of Covid-19 cases reached 7,85,194, said a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

In the previous day, 1,608 people tested positive for the virus.

With yesterday's three people in Jashore, 29 Indian returnees have so far been diagnosed with Covid-19.

Of them, six were infected with the Indian variant which the World Health Organisation has announced as a "variant of concern". This variant, responsible for the recent health disaster in India, has spread over 40 countries so far.

The Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) has not yet said in which level this variant has spread in the country.

Experts, however, said this variant is a threat for the country.

Meanwhile, the positivity rate yesterday also decreased slightly -- to 7.5 percent from the previous day's 7.83 percent.

From Saturday's 6.95 percent, the positivity rate started rising again compared to a steep rise during the ongoing second wave of Covid-19.

With the latest count, the overall positivity rate stands at 13.60 percent.

In 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday,

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COVID CRISIS IN INDIA 'Black fungus' surges among virus patients

Health ministry asks states to declare it epidemic

AGENCIES

India has ordered tighter surveillance of a rare fungal disease hitting Covid-19 patients, officials said yesterday, piling pressure on hospitals struggling with the world's highest number of daily infections of the novel coronavirus.

Mucormycosis, or "black fungus" usually infects people whose immune system has been compromised, causing blackening or discolouration over the nose, blurred or double vision, chest pain, breathing difficulties and coughing blood.

Doctors believe that the use of steroids to treat severe Covid-19 could be causing the rash of cases because those drugs reduce immunity and push up sugar levels.

Health Secretary Lav Agarwal said in a letter to state governments that mucormycosis had emerged as a new challenge for Covid-19 patients on steroid therapy and those with pre-existing diabetes.

"This fungal infection is leading to

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ROAD TO FREEDOM THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Yahya invites refugees to return home!

MAY 21, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATED, ADMITS PAKISTAN

Pakistan today conceded that there had been violations of human rights in East Pakistan and that "as in all conflicts innocent people had suffered". Agha Shahi, Pakistan's permanent representative to the UN, speaking at the Economic and Social Council this morning also conceded that there were refugees in India, including women and children.

Agha Shahi made these statements while trying to block India's right to make a statement in the ECOSOC. Agha Shahi's move, however, failed and the Indian Ambassador, Samar Sen, made a statement concentrating mainly on the need for organisation of relief for refugees in India and creating conditions for their early return to Pakistan.

In objecting to Samar Sen being allowed to speak Agha Shahi made the proposition that though human rights had been violated and though humanitarian issues were involved, "in view of the sensitivity and seriousness of the situation facing his country a discussion of humanitarian problems should not be allowed".

YAHYA KHAN'S INVITATION

Pakistan President Yahya Khan today accused India of circulating highly exaggerated and distorted accounts of events in East Pakistan and invited the evacuees to return home. Yahya Khan claimed that

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Hefajat man dies in judicial custody

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A Hefajat-e-Islam activist died at a hospital in the capital yesterday while undergoing treatment in judicial custody.

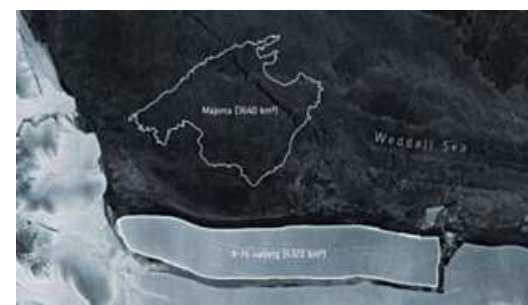
Iqbal Hossain, 60, was a member of the Qawmi madrasa-based organisation's Sonargaon upazila unit of Narayanganj and president of Khelafat Majlis of the upazila unit.

He had been undergoing treatment at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital since May 15 with multiple physical complications, including heart disease. He died around 12:00 noon, said Suwash Kumar Ghosh, senior jail super of Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj.

Iqbal along with three other Hefajat men were arrested in the capital's Jurain area on April 12 in violence cases. On the same day, they were produced before a court that sent

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World's largest iceberg comes from Antarctica



REUTERS

A giant slab of ice bigger than the Spanish island of Majorca has sheared off from the frozen edge of Antarctica into the Weddell Sea, becoming the largest iceberg afloat in the world, the European Space Agency said on Wednesday.

The newly calved berg, designated A-76 by scientists, was spotted in recent satellite images captured by the Copernicus Sentinel-1 mission, the space agency said in a statement posted on its website with a photo of the enormous, oblong ice sheet.

Its surface area spans 4,320 square km (1,668 square miles) and measures 175 km (106 miles) long by 25 km (15 miles) wide.

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PRAYER TIMING MAY 21

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-05 12-30 5-00 6-40 8-00
JAMAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-45 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

AL factional clash leaves two dead

SUSHANTA GHOSH

Two men were killed and at least 10 more injured in a clash between two groups of the ruling Awami League in Barishal's Mehendiganj upazila.

The clash broke out around 10:00am yesterday at the house of local union parishad member Abdur Rob Dhali over elections.

The dead are Abdus Sattar Dhali, 55, elder brother of Abdur Rab Dhali, and Siddiqur Rahman, 28, of neighbouring Saldi village, said police.

According to Abdur Rob Dhali, his family members got involved in an altercation with the men of Kalam Bepari, general secretary of Dhulkhola union AL in the district's Hijla upazila.

Abdur Rob Dhali, president of North Ulaunia union AL and a UP member of ward-1, also said a group of 50 to 60 people attacked their house around 11:00am with sticks and sharp weapons.

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An old world oriole spotted on a tree branch in Annadapara village of Tangail's Ghatail upazila. The bird became tried as humidity was high. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

KHULNA DIVISION'S WATER CRISIS Dearth now in all 10 districts

78pc drinking water sources dried up, say DPHE officials

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

The crisis of pure drinking water is deepening in Khulna division as the underground water level has also gone down in five previously unaffected districts, say experts.

Of the 10 districts in Khulna division, this crisis has been going on for several years in five districts -- Khulna, Narail, Bagerhat, Jashore, and Satkhira. But the remaining five districts have been facing similar problems since March this year.

The newly affected districts, which cover a large area of Padma and Gorai river basins, are Kushtia, Jhenaidah, Meherpur, Chuadanga, and Magura.

It causes immense sufferings to a large section of people in the country's south and southwestern region. The dryness may also affect the world's largest mangrove forest -- Sundarbans -- said environmentalists.

There was hardly any rain in this region in the last eight months. As a result, underground water level has gone down between 200 feet and 400 feet, varying from place to place, said experts.

Many tube wells have gone out of order. Around 78 percent of drinking water sources have already dried up in this region, said officials of the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE).

Water flow in the Padma and Gorai rivers has decreased significantly as water does not come to the Padma from the Ganges timely, said Jahidul Islam, executive engineer of Water Development Board (BWDB) in Kushtia.

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