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Your Right to Know

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"Rozina will get a fair judgment... no doubt about that."
FOREIGN MINISTER
AK ABUL MOMEN



"I believe we have a genuine opportunity to make progress and I'm committed to working toward it."
BIDEN ON GAZA CEASEFIRE



"Total deaths are at least two to three times higher than officially reported."
WHO ASSISTANT DG
SAMIRA ASMA ON COVID

Pandemic curbs only on paper

Due to slack enforcement, 'restrictions' fail to stop movement, crowd of people; experts fear fallout of home rush next week

MUNTAKIM SAAD and MOJIBUDDIN AHMED SUJAN

The restrictions to contain the spread of Covid-19 remain only on paper as there is little enforcement by government agencies to control public movement and plying of vehicles.

With inter-district buses off the road, those who left the capital for village homes to celebrate the Eid-ul-Fitr are now returning in jam-packed vehicles, flouting the health safety guidelines.

Yesterday, thousands of holidaymakers from southern districts flocked to Banglabazar, Daulatdia and Kazirhat ferry terminals to reach the capital, crossing the Padma.

Besides, the number of people on the streets, and at kitchen markets, shopping malls, restaurants and parks in the city has gone up significantly. Many of them do not wear any facemasks and follow the social distancing rules.

Health experts have again warned that such careless acts amid lax enforcement of the restrictions could result in a spike in coronavirus cases.

There has been a rise in Covid infections after the Eid. Over 1,500 cases were reported yesterday, up from 261 a week ago.

Experts and health officials had earlier said the Indian and three other variants of Covid could cause another surge in infections unless strict restrictions were enforced properly.

Noted virologist Prof Nazrul Islam said the way holidaymakers have been travelling across the country clearly showed that the restrictions were not being implemented.

"Instead of keeping the buses off the road, those should be allowed to operate, maintaining the health safety rules," said the member of the National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19.

Commenting on the bureaucratic tangles at different ministries, he said, "The advisory committee sends recommendations to the health ministry.

"The file then lies idle there for days. We don't know the officials who see these recommendations and make decisions. Then the file goes to the public administration ministry. Do you even know how many officials are involved in the process? This is not the right way to get things done."

By the time the officials reach a decision, the recommendations lose their timeliness, he said.

RUSH AT ENTRY POINTS

In five days from May 15, at least 5,345,826

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Passengers get off a ferry at Shimulia ghat in Munshiganj's Louhajang upazila around 3:00pm yesterday. People returning to Dhaka after celebrating Eid did not maintain physical distancing as there was a huge rush of passengers. Eighteen ferries carried mostly passengers on Banglabazar-Shimulia route throughout the day.

PHOTO: SAJJAD HOSSAIN

World leaders hail Gaza ceasefire

Vow to help Palestinians to rebuild; fresh clashes in Jerusalem



AGENCIES

World leaders have hailed a ceasefire that took hold in the early hours of yesterday and vowed to help rebuild Gaza, after an Israeli bombing campaign that killed more than 240 people and Palestinian rocket attacks that killed 12 in Israel.

The worst violence since 2014 ceased after 11 days under an agreement mediated by Egypt.

The United Nations secretary general urged Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers to observe the ceasefire and called on global leaders to develop a reconstruction package "that supports the Palestinian people and strengthens their institutions".

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SINOPHARM VACCINE China to give another six lakh doses as gift

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

China yesterday announced providing the second batch of 600,000 doses of Covid-19 vaccine to Bangladesh as gift.

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi had a phone conversation with Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abul Momen in this regard.

In a statement, Chinese embassy in Dhaka said China pays close attention to the latest epidemic situation in Bangladesh.

At this critical time in Bangladesh's fight against the epidemic, China is concerned about the urgent need for vaccine of Bangladeshi friends, the embassy said.

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Hospital suffers, so do patients

National Institute of ENT almost crippled due to lack of necessary workforce; ICU non functional

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Patients are deprived of an intensive care unit at the National Institute of Ear, Nose and Throat as the authorities have failed to make it functional over the years due to the dearth of necessary workforce.

While the ICU lies idle, costly artificial respiratory ventilator (ARV) machines have remained unused at the institution for around two years.

Eight ARV machines and other equipment gathering dust for years in a store room and the non-functional ICU were highlighted in an Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) assessment report in March last year.

"In many cases, critical patients needed ICU support after complicated operations. But the patients are not getting this service in the hospital," the report read.

One biochemistry semi auto analyser, Eliza auto washer, Eliza plate incubator, eight ICU ventilators, one CO2 laser,

diode laser machine, and one unit sleep lab equipment were found to be non-functional, the IMED also found.

In the year since the report was released, little has changed at the National Institute of ENT, located in the city's Tejgaon area. The Daily Star found from hospital sources.

The government spent Tk 62.41 crore under a project called the "Establishment of National Institute of ENT 1st Phase in Dhaka", aimed at supplying the lone specialised ENT hospital with modern equipment so that it could better serve patients.

While the project was officially completed in 2014, most of the equipment reached the hospital in 2018.

All the eight costly ARV machines had been lying idle in a store room since, and much of the hospital equipment had gone out of order in the meantime, said the report.

According to hospital sources, six ARV machines after necessary repairs were sent to Jashore General Hospital in April last

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PALLABI TRADER MURDER Accused killed in 'gunfight' with Rab

Prime accused ex-MP Awal, 2 others remanded

STAR REPORT

An accused in trader Shahinuddin murder case was killed in a "gunfight" with Rapid Action Battalion in Eastern Housing area of the capital's Pallabi early yesterday.

Deceased Manik, 32, was directly involved in the killing of the trader on May 16 in front of his seven-year-old son, said Rab.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday placed former lawmaker MA Awal (Lakshimpur-1), the prime accused in the case, and two other accused Zahirul Islam Babu and Md Hasan on four-day remand each for interrogation.

The Rab arrested Awal from Bhairab in Kishoreganj early Thursday. It claimed that Awal planned the murder with Taher and Sumon at his office in the capital's Kalabagan four to five days before the incident.

According to the elite force, Sumon, who led a group of assailants, called Awal after the killing and said: "Sir, finished".

Yesterday, the court placed the three accused on remand after investigation officer Syed Iftokhar Hossain, also an inspector of the Detective Branch of police, produced them before it seeking 10-day remand for each, said court sources. The Rab arrested Zahirul from Patuakhali on Thursday and Hasan from Chandpur on Wednesday.

Awal is a former secretary general of Bangladesh Tarikat

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COVID PANDEMIC 26 more die, 1,504 test positive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Officials yesterday reported 1,504 new cases of coronavirus and 26 deaths from the disease.

This takes the number of confirmed infections to 7,86,698 and deaths to 12,310, reads a release from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Meanwhile, a 17-year-old boy named Sakib Uddin, who recently returned from India, died yesterday in Chuadanga from Covid-19.

Besides, a six-month-old baby and a 11-year old child tested positive after spending 14 days in quarantine since returning from India.

He was a cancer patient taking treatment in India, said ASM Fateh Akram, resident medical officer of Chuadanga Sadar Hospital.

Sakib returned to Bangladesh through Benapole on May 9, he added.

Sakib's brother Akib said he was admitted to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital

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Journalists stage a protest in front of Dhaka Reporters Unity in the capital's Shegunbagicha yesterday demanding release of Prothom Alo senior reporter Rozina Islam. The protesters threatened waging a tougher movement if the journo was not freed from jail by tomorrow.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

83 eminent citizens demand Rozina's release

Journos to go for tougher programmes if she's not freed by tomorrow; Momen tells CNN she'll get fair treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eighty-three eminent citizens of the country have demanded unconditional release of daily Prothom Alo's Senior Reporter Rozina Islam, who was arrested in a case filed by the health ministry on Monday.

In a statement yesterday, they said, "We strongly demand the immediate withdrawal of the motivated case against Rozina Islam, her unconditional release, an inquiry to identify those responsible for harassing her and bringing them to book."

They said everyone, including the civil society, had hoped that Rozina would have been granted bail on Thursday in consideration of the sensitive nature of the incident, the citizen's right to bail and the question of justice.

However, the decision on bail order was fixed for tomorrow.

The eminent citizens said, "The delay by the court in taking a decision regarding Rozina's bail disappointed us."

They said all the charges in the case against Rozina were bailable and if she had been granted bail, there would have been no obstacle to the next hearing of the case.

The statement said, "There has been strong protest and reaction from home and abroad about the arrest of senior woman journalist Rozina on fabricated charges by the health and family welfare ministry. The journalist community, civil society and even senior quarters within the government have issued statements terming the arrest of Rozina unwarranted and an embarrassment for the government. The United Nations has expressed its concern at the incident too. The issue has appeared in leading

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