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Put 8 districts on lockdown now

DGHS recommends; infection rate there over 30pc for a week; IEDCR chief says community transmission of Indian variant on

MOUJIB AHMED SUJAN

Health officials yesterday recommended immediate "strict lockdown" of eight districts that have witnessed an average of over 30 percent Covid-19 positivity rate for a week.

In Chapainawabganj, seven individuals, who have not travelled to India recently, tested positive for the Indian variant of the coronavirus, leading researchers to believe that the variant is being transmitted in the community.

The local administration in Chapainawabganj already enforced strict restrictions on mobility until Monday. The other districts recommended for "lockdown" are Naogaon, Rajshahi, Natore, Kushtia, Jashore, Khulna and Satkhira.

"Considering the latest situation, we recommended that the Cabinet Division enforce strict lockdown in the districts. The Directorate General of Health Services will send the recommendation to the Cabinet via the health ministry," Abu Jamil Faisal, member of the Epidemiology and Public Health Committee of the health directorate, told The Daily Star last night after the committee held a meeting.

Meanwhile, the chief of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) yesterday said the Indian variant of coronavirus has transmitted in the community as 13 new cases of the variant have been detected in several districts.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

POSITIVITY RATES YESTERDAY

- Satkhira 66%
- Chapainawabganj 34%
- Khulna 17.8%
- Kushtia 16.89%
- Rajshahi 22%



Farmers drying paddy on the concrete floor at a mill in Nimtoli area of Munshiganj before the husk and the bran layers are removed to produce the country's staple food, rice. Officials said the growers have been blessed with a remarkable harvest this year.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Will maintain friendship with all to move forward

Says prime minister

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said Bangladesh has to maintain friendship with all as the government wants to turn the country into a developed and prosperous one.

"We want to build Bangladesh as a developed and prosperous country. I think Bangladesh has to move forward maintaining friendship with all to this end," she said.

The premier was addressing a function at Shenakunja at Dhaka Cantonment

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Sri Lanka's economic plight a caution for Bangladesh

REJAIL KARIM BYRON

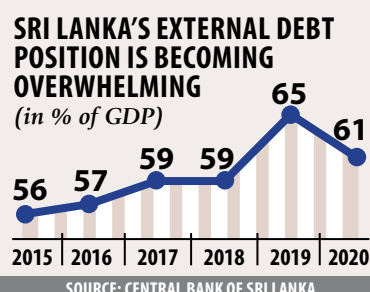
That Bangladesh is in a position to bail out Sri Lanka, a middle-income country by the World Bank's classification since 1997, by extending up to \$500 million -- is a nice lift to the country's morale.

But this episode is also a cautionary tale for Bangladesh: if the government does not get its act together now, the country could very well be in Sri Lanka's position in a few years.

The Achilles heel of the two economies is the same: low tax base, overreliance on a single item for exports and insubstantial foreign direct investment.

What Bangladesh has on its side is time.

It is still a least-developed country, meaning it has access to concessionary loans from multilateral and bilateral lenders like the World Bank, the



International Monetary Fund, the Asian Development Bank and the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

The loans have a protracted tenure of 25-40 years as well as a reasonable grace period and interest rate of less than 2 percent.

A casualty of a quarter-century-long

civil war, Sri Lanka relied much on such foreign debt to build its infrastructure -- an economical practice, for the most part.

But at the turn of the century, following its graduation to a lower-middle-income country in 1997, Sri Lanka's access to such loans had dwindled, meaning it had to look elsewhere for funds.

In 2007, Sri Lanka issued its maiden international sovereign bond (ISB) -- worth \$500 million -- and increasingly started to turn to this commercial borrowing channel.

The ISBs have a repayment period of 5-10 years, carry interest rates of upwards of 6 percent and no grace period.

To compound matters, there are principal payments: the total

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

GANG-RAPE ON BUS Cops arrest six after rescuing the victim

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

A Dhaka court yesterday placed five men on remand, three-day each, in a case filed over gang-rape of a woman on a running bus in Savar's Ashulia.

Dhaka's Senior Judicial Magistrate Shahzadi Tahmida passed the order after the investigation officer of the case Inspector Mohammad Ziaul Islam produced the five before the court with a five-day remand prayer, according to court sources.

The accused rapists put on remand are Mohammad

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

HUMAN TRAFFICKING TO INDIA Young female TikTok users targeted

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Saima [not her real name], 15, led a regular teenage life of this generation, making videos on popular mobile app TikTok, before she was trafficked to India with the promise of a better job.

She was one of the victims of Rifatul Islam Ridoy, 26, popularly known as Ridoy Babo on TikTok, who lured her to the South Indian city Bengaluru promising her a well-paid job two months ago, along with four other girls, through Sathkhira border.

Saima, who used to work at a shopping mall in Bangladesh, thought that she would get a better job in India. After going there, however, she found that they were trafficked to India for sex work.

As they refused to be a part of the trade, the gang members tortured them and forced them into sex work. After a month and half, three of them were able to flee the Indian state and return home recently.

After a video clip of a 22-year-old woman being tortured and sexually assaulted went viral on social media, Indian police on Thursday arrested Ridoy Babo, along with five other Bangladeshis from Bengaluru.

Bangladesh police then began investigation and found a transnational racket, involving some Bangladeshis, trafficking some young girls using TikTok and forcing them into sex work in India.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Engineer sued under DSA for FB post

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday arrested a diploma engineer from Chattogram's Banskhalhi upazila in connection with a case filed under the Digital Security Act (DSA) after he made a Facebook post over "SS Power I Plant" at the upazila's Gandamara union.

The arrestee is Shahnewaz Chowdhury, 37, of the upazila, said police sources.

Humayun Kabir, assistant superintendent of police (ASP) of Anwara Circle police, told The Daily Star, "Shahnewaz was held from his house after Faruk Ahmed, chief coordinator of the power plant, filed a case with Banskhalhi Police Station, accusing the engineer of tarnishing the power plant's image."

According to the case statement, Shahnewaz, on Wednesday, wrote on his Facebook "[Deaths]

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



Migrant workers eager to go to join their workplaces in Saudi Arabia waiting in front of the Saudi office at the capital's Sonargaon hotel. The government will pay up to Tk 25,000 for each of the workers' mandatory week-long quarantine in hotels of the Gulf country, which is some relief for the cash-strapped workers.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

LSD mailed to Bangladesh

Detectives say syndicates used postal service to bring them in from the Netherlands for 4 yrs

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The hallucinogenic drug called lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) was being smuggled into Bangladesh from the Netherlands using the postal service for the last four years.

A drug syndicate used to smuggle LSD blotting paper by stashing those inside books as they look like stamp or colourful paper.

At least three syndicates are involved in selling the drug in Bangladesh.

Officials of the Detective Branch of police disclosed these to The Daily Star yesterday. They found this information during their probe into the death of Dhaka University student Hafizur Rahman.

Hafizur slit his throat himself after taking LSD on the campus on May 15, his friends told detectives during interrogation.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

MIGRANTS QUARANTINE IN SAUDI ARABIA Govt decides to share cost of hotel stay

Up to Tk 25k will be given to each worker from wage earners' welfare fund

RASHIDUL HASAN and JAMIL MAHMUD

The government has decided to pay up to Tk 25,000 for each Bangladeshi worker's stay in hotel in Saudi Arabia for their seven-day on-arrival institutional quarantine.

"The money will be provided from the wage earners' welfare fund," Expatriates' Welfare Secretary Ahmed Munir Saleheen told The Daily Star over phone yesterday.

The lion's share of the fund comes from the Bangladeshis working in different countries across the world. The fund is looked after by a board of members from the expatriates' welfare ministry with the secretary in the chair.

Secretary Saleheen also said they were working to vaccinate all migrants leaving so that they no longer needed to stay in quarantine.

The development came nine days after Saudi Arabia issued a travel advisory on May 20 for non-restricted countries, including Bangladesh, making it mandatory for workers to stay in hotel quarantine for seven days.

The advisory caused huge sufferings to the migrant workers and casted uncertainty over their joining work in Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, an inter-ministerial meeting will be held today to discuss different issues,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

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