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LOCKDOWN IN BORDER DISTRICTS Health officials, admin not on same page

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Concerned over the sharp rise in Covid cases, the civil surgeons in six bordering districts have called for complete lockdown in the infection-prone areas to prevent further spread of the virus.

However, it is up to the local administration to decide on enforcement of lockdown in any area as the government has empowered it to do so.

The six bordering districts -- Rajshahi, Naogaon, Natore, Jashore, Kushtia and Khulna -- saw a surge in Covid infections over the last few days. Also, there has been a spike in virus cases in Satkhira.

Top officials in these districts said they would observe the Covid situation for the next few days and decide on imposing lockdown after discussions with all the stakeholders.

After the weekly cabinet meeting, Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said he was in favour of imposing lockdown in the bordering districts.

He told journalists that his ministry wanted immediate implementation of stricter restrictions in the bordering districts as both infections and

"Sluggish lockdown will not bear any fruit. If we are to succeed in curbing the spread of the virus, lockdown has to be enforced properly."

SHEIKH ABU SHAHIN, CIVIL SURGEON IN JASHORE.

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Children frolic in the rain that brought the temperature down after sweltering heat yesterday. The photo was taken in Wireless area of the capital's Moghbazar.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Social safety net to widen

Number of beneficiaries to rise by 16 lakh

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and WASIM BIN HABIB

Around 16 lakh more elderly citizens, widows, and people with disabilities are likely to get government benefits from next

fiscal year.

The amount of the cash allowance will be the Tk 500 per month received by current beneficiaries, said finance ministry sources, adding that the government is set to expand the

social safety net coverage in the upcoming budget.

Over eight lakh of the fresh beneficiaries are elderly people, four lakh are widowed, deserted and destitute women, and three

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'Our people kept our economy strong'

Says the finance minister ahead of the budget

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The Bangladesh economy has weathered the pandemic storm better than others and it is thanks to its citizens, said Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal.



"Our people never stopped working. They left it to God and went about their livelihoods. Our people are very resilient -- they never give up," he told The Daily Star on Sunday.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's stimulus packages amounting to Tk 124,053 crore, which is equivalent to 4.4 percent of the country's GDP growth, also helped stem the tide of the coronavirus juggernaut that caused the global economic growth to plunge to -3 percent in 2020, according to the International Monetary Fund.

Subsequently, Kamal expects the economy to clock in GDP growth of no less than 6 percent this fiscal year, which will wrap up on June 30.

"I am an accountant and with all the numbers I have in front of me, I can safely say that our growth would be more than 5 percent. The vibrations that I am seeing in the economy, I expect the GDP growth to be 6.1 percent."

The World Bank projected Bangladesh's GDP to grow at

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UNHCR concerned by Bhasan Char demo

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The UN Refugee Agency has expressed deep concerns over reports of events in Bhasan Char where several thousand Rohingyas demonstrated as two high UNHCR officials visited the housing project for the refugees.

"We are deeply concerned to learn of reports of refugees who have been injured

during today's events on the island. We regret that those affected reportedly include children and women," the UNHCR said in a statement last night.

It did not elaborate how the Rohingyas were injured, but media reported that thousands of Rohingyas yesterday demonstrated in Bhasan Char when two high officials of the

UN Refugee Agency headquarters visited the housing project.

Several thousand Rohingyas staged "unruly" protests Monday against living conditions on a cyclone-prone island off Bangladesh where they were moved from vast camps on the mainland, police said, reports AFP.

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