



"It's a relationship, you can call it the 'deep and meaningful relationship', whatever you want, the 'indestructible relationship'."
BRITISH PM BORIS JOHNSON ON UK-US RELATIONSHIP



"The Chinese authorities have created a dystopian hellscape on a staggering scale."
AMNESTY SECRETARY GENERAL AGNES CALLAMARD ON UYGHUR ABUSES



"In just over four months, Myanmar has gone from being a fragile democracy to a human rights catastrophe."
UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS MICHELLE BACHELET

VIRUS HOTSPOT IN BORDER AREAS

Districts grappling with Covid surge

Health experts say situation may turn into a full-blown crisis if strict preventive measures are not in place now

STAR REPORT

Amid a steady rise in virus infections and deaths across the country, the Covid crisis in the bordering districts has apparently deepened further.

As in the past few days, the hospitals in these districts grappled with an increasing number of patients yesterday. Most of the Covid units at the hospitals had already been at full capacity. Some of them kept turning away new patients.

Health officials said many of the hospitals are ill-equipped and understaffed to tackle the crisis.

They said some hospitals still do not have adequate ICU beds, a central oxygen supply system -- essential to provide uninterrupted oxygen to critical patients -- and other Covid-related treatment facilities.

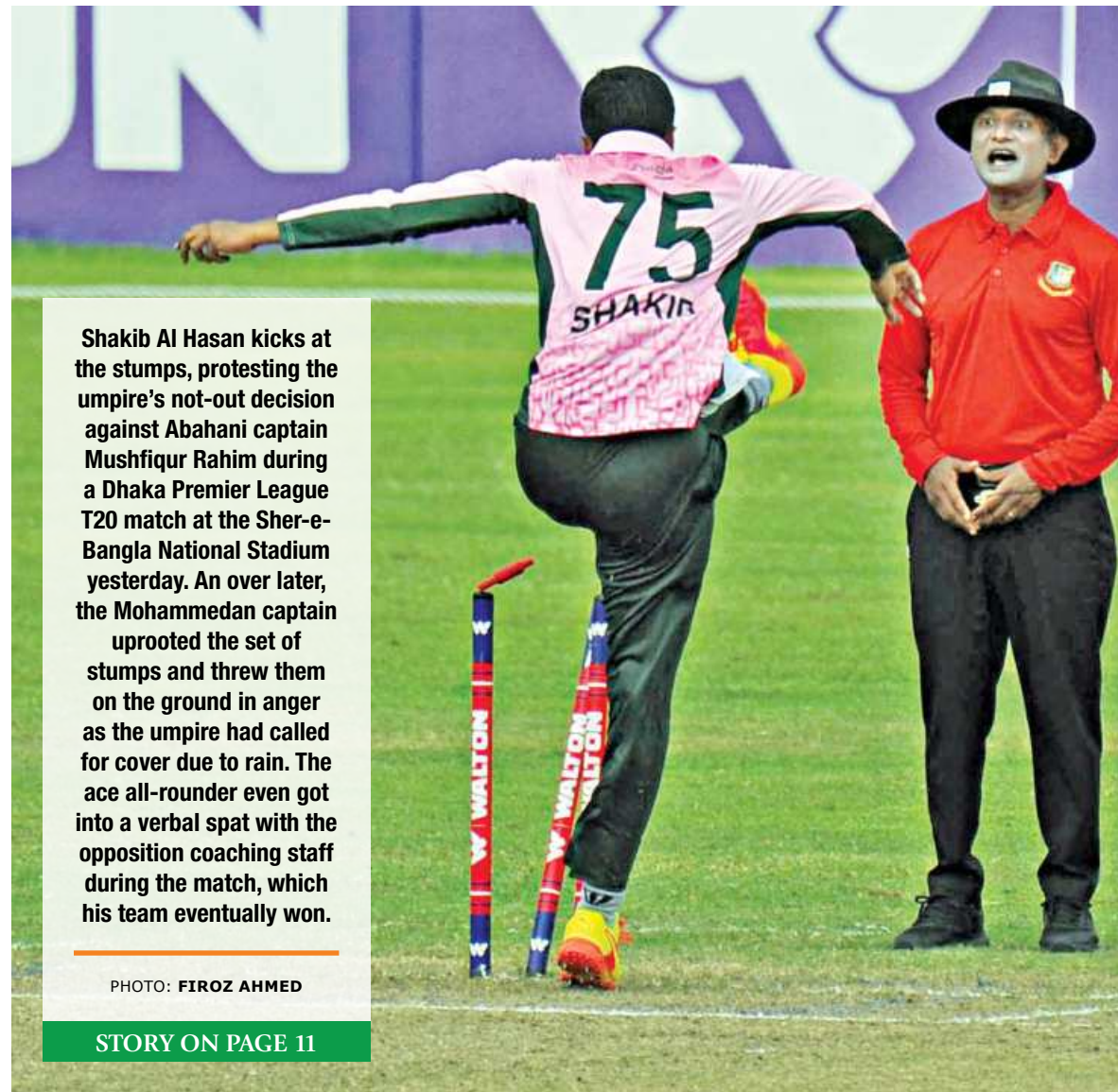
The officials believe the highly contagious Indian variant of the virus is responsible for the deterioration in the situation in these districts that share border with India.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, health experts warned that the Covid situation may turn into a full-blown crisis soon if strict measures are not taken right away.

They stressed the need for following the health safety rules strictly.

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- District, upazila hospitals ill-equipped and understaffed
- The highest 15 deaths recorded in Rajshahi district in 24 hours
- Natore, Naogaon districts see more than 50% positivity rate
- No bed available for new Covid patients at Khulna hospitals



Shakib Al Hasan kicks at the stumps, protesting the umpire's not-out decision against Abahani captain Mushfiqur Rahim during a Dhaka Premier League T20 match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. An over later, the Mohammedan captain uprooted the set of stumps and threw them on the ground in anger as the umpire had called for cover due to rain. The ace all-rounder even got into a verbal spat with the opposition coaching staff during the match, which his team eventually won.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

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The Daily Star IPDC Present

UNsung WOMEN NATION BUILDERS AWARD 2021

The Daily Star, IPDC to host the award ceremony tonight virtually

The virtual gala event will unveil the winners of Unsung Women Nation Builders Award 2021 at 7:30pm today on Facebook and YouTube. The ceremony organised by The Daily Star and IPDC Finance will honour six unsung women for their exceptional humanitarian and courageous activities amid Covid-19 pandemic. The winners will receive Tk 2 lakh each. Keep an eye on The Daily Star's Facebook page and YouTube channel and also IPDC's Facebook page tonight to know the amazing stories of six unsung women.

BORDERING DISTRICTS

Free Covid test for the poor for 3 months

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The health ministry asked its officials in certain districts along the border to test the poor people for coronavirus for free.

The decision is aimed at increasing the number of daily tests in the districts where the positivity rates are higher than the rest of the country.

Officials have also been instructed to supply medical equipment and human resources in those highly affected districts.

"We asked civil surgeons at the bordering districts to make Covid-19 tests free for the poor people over the next three months," Health Minister Zahid Maleque told The Daily Star.

He added that additional medicines, oxygen concentrators, and beds will be sent to the highly infected areas.

Currently, Chapainawabganj, Rajshahi, Natore, Naogaon, Satkhira, Khulna, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Joypurhat and some other districts are witnessing a surge in daily new cases.

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ASTRAZENECA VACCINE FROM COVAX

Bangladesh to get 1m doses 'soon'

Foreign minister tells media

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is going to receive 1 million 800 shots of AstraZeneca vaccines under the Covax programme, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said yesterday.

"We are getting 1 million 800 AstraZeneca vaccine soon under the Covax program," he said in a message to the media sent through his press official.

Covax, a worldwide initiative aimed at equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines, directed by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and the World Health Organization, has however not mentioned the source of the AstraZeneca vaccine that will be supplied to Bangladesh.

This comes as good news for Bangladesh as the country has eagerly been waiting for AstraZeneca vaccines because some 15 lakh people who got the first jab have been in uncertainty about whether they would get the second dose in time.

On May 1, the first consignment of 1,00,620 Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 doses was supplied to Bangladesh. Bangladesh is supposed to receive a total of 68 million vaccine doses from the Covax facility, which is still facing shortage and is not able to adequately supply the low-income and developing countries.

Bangladesh has also been facing vaccine shortage since India halted export of AstraZeneca vaccines since March due to massive rise in infections and deaths there.

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Nerve-racking 24 hours

Cases documents narrate madness at Hathazari madrasa on March 26-27

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Chattogram

A constable was held hostage at the Hathazari madrasa to force the authorities to release the bodies of four people, killed during the March 26 mayhem, without autopsies, according to a case document.

The document also described the tension between Hefazat-e-Islam and the administration at Hathazari upazila as violence flared up during the protest against the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Md Solaiman, constable (watcher) of Chattogram district police, who was picked up while on-duty and confined to the madrasa for about 24 hours, filed the case on April 21, accusing Hefazat chief Junayed Babunagari and 215 persons.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the case document recently.

At least 11 Hefazat leaders and activists have been arrested so far in the case, now under investigation by the Detective Branch in Chattogram.

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1b Covid jabs for poorer countries

G7 leaders pledge; aid groups, health organisations say pledge falls short

AGENCIES

G7 leaders yesterday opened their first in-person talks in nearly two years, with an expected pledge to donate one billion Covid vaccine doses to poor countries on the agenda in a show of Western democratic cohesion.

The club of leading economies -- Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and United States -- said a joint approach is the world's best chance for recovering from the global health crisis, and tackling climate change.

Welcomed by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to the beachside summit venue in Carbis Bay, southwest England, the leaders posed for a family photo before opening their first session of talks on "building back better" after the pandemic.

The meeting presents a "huge opportunity" for global pandemic recovery, Johnson told his fellow leaders in opening remarks, as they sat socially distanced and without masks at a round table.

It would focus, he said, on "building back greener, building back fairer and building back more equal", with an emphasis on gender equality.

US President Joe Biden had set the tone, ditching Donald Trump's isolationist stance to ram home a message of resolve by the G7 and Nato against both Beijing and Moscow, as he heads into his first sit-down with Russian President Vladimir Putin next week in Geneva.

"I'm looking forward to reinforcing our commitment to multilateralism and working with our allies and partners to build a more fair and inclusive global economy," Biden tweeted from the G7 in Cornwall.

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Thirteen-year-old Tanvir working in dark and dangerous conditions at a factory that produces metal kitchen utensils in Tongi. Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of children working in hazardous circumstances has increased. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

ENDING HAZARDOUS CHILD LABOUR

Tk 284cr project in a shambles

Sees only 1.33pc progress till end of deadline, gets extension up to December this year

NILIMA JAHAN

More than three years ago, the government had taken up a project with the aim of eliminating hazardous child labour from Bangladesh by 2020.

It has been more than six months since the deadline has come and gone, but the project named "Eradication of Hazardous Child Labour in Bangladesh (4th phase)" has seen hardly any progress.

According to the latest Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) report, the Tk 284 crore project had progressed just 1.33 percent till end of December last year -- the original deadline.

The deadline of the project, being implemented by the labour and employment ministry with the help of national-level NGOs working on child labour, has now been pushed to December 2021.

But child rights activists are sceptical about the timely completion of the project as progress is still at a very early stage.

For the glacial rate of implementation, project officials blamed the pandemic, although the first cases of coronavirus were detected in the country on March 8 last year -- more than two years after the project was

WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR

initiated in January 2018. Child rights activists blamed bureaucratic wrangles and delay in selecting NGOs for the sluggish progress of the project, which aimed at getting one lakh children out of hazardous labour.

These children work in 38 sectors categorised as hazardous, which include welding, transportation, automobile workshops, tobacco factories and battery recharging shops.

According to the project, one lakh children will be provided six months' non-formal education and four months' skill development training, and a monthly stipend of Tk 1,000.

At the end of that time, the best 10,000 trainees would be provided Tk 15,000 as seed money. A database would also be prepared to track the employment information of one lakh children.

KM Abdus Salam, secretary of the labour ministry, said an initial list of NGOs has been prepared and it will be finalised once the cabinet committee on government purchase approves it.

"The process of sending the list to the

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