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"Legislation restricting the freedoms of expression...should be brought in line with international human rights norms and standards."
UN RIGHTS CHIEF MICHELLE BACHELET



"From our party we have tried to establish a workable co-existence with the BNP. But there has been no positive response from them."
AWAMI LEAGUE GENERAL SECRETARY OBAIDUL QUADER



"Everything will be closed. Not even people will be able to move about. The districts will be completely blocked, nobody will be able to enter or exit."
CABINET SECRETARY KHANDAKER ANWARUL ISLAM

FRESH CURBS IN SURROUNDING DISTRICTS

Dhaka to remain almost cut off

7 districts see stricter restrictions till June 30; weeklong lockdown of Khulna also from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has imposed movement restrictions on seven districts near Dhaka for nine days starting today, almost shutting off the capital from the rest of the country in the wake of sharp spikes in Covid-19 cases and deaths.

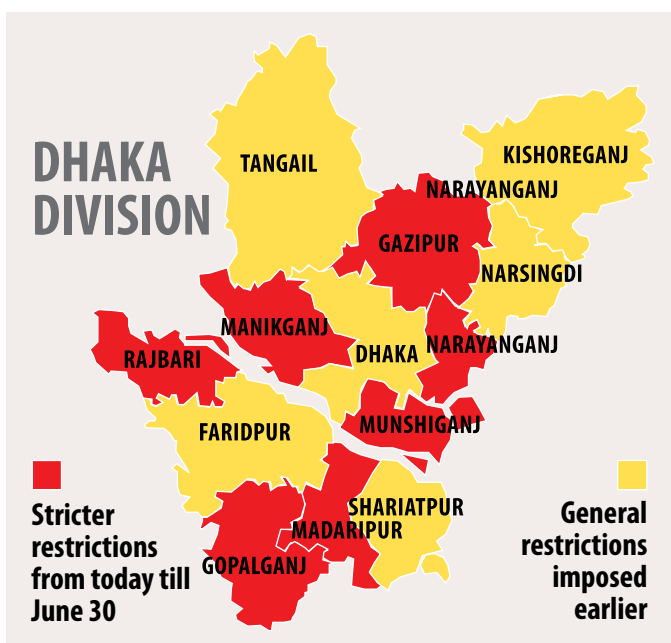
The daily positivity rate yesterday was 19.27 percent, the highest since April 17 when the country was at the height of the second wave of the pandemic.

The death rate is currently 1.59 percent, with 78 deaths reported yesterday -- the highest number of single-day deaths reported since May 2.

The restrictions -- from 6:00am today till midnight on June 30 -- will specifically bar the movement of people in and out of the districts near the capital, according to a circular issued by the Cabinet Division.

This curb will result in blocking off the capital from people of the rest of the

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An elderly patient taking oxygen from a concentrator lying next to his wife on the floor of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital's Covid-19 unit yesterday. He is sharing the machine with another patient. The hospital has been grappling with an increasing number of coronavirus patient for over three weeks. All the beds at the unit had been occupied long ago. PHOTO: ANWAR ALI

Positivity rate, infections jump

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Covid-19 positivity rate reached 19.27 percent yesterday, the highest in over two months.

The high rate of positivity is an indication that many others in the community have the virus, but are undetected, according to experts across the world.

Yesterday's positivity rate was the highest since April 17, when it was 21 percent, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

In May last year, the World Health Organization recommended that governments should not lift restrictions unless the positivity rate stays below 5 percent for at least two weeks.

In the 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday, at least 4,636

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Govt to buy 7cr J&J vaccine shots

Jabs to be available a year from now; enough to inoculate 60pc of adult population

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Bangladesh is going to purchase seven crore doses of the Johnson & Johnson's coronavirus vaccine using the Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access (Covax) facility.

The government has, in principle, decided to procure the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine, called Janssen, which will be available from next June, said officials.

"A few days ago, Covax wrote to us asking whether we want Moderna or Johnson & Johnson vaccine from June next year. We decided to procure the Johnson & Johnson vaccine as it is single dose," Health Minister Zahid Maleque told The Daily Star yesterday.

He also said that the vaccine will be purchased using the Asian Development Bank (ADB) fund.

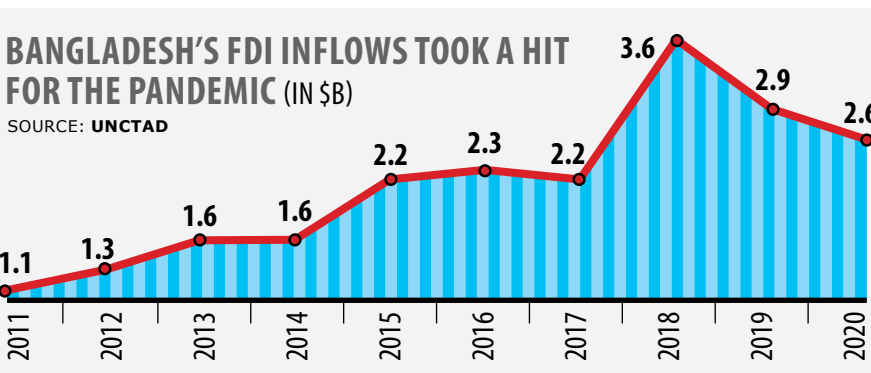
If 12 crore people are targeted for vaccination, the seven crore doses will cover around 60 percent of the total population.

The Covax facility is a global initiative coordinated by the World Health Organization, the Vaccine Alliance Gavi, and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. The facility is working to ensure that low- and middle-income countries have equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines.

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FDI outlook bleak for Bangladesh

Says UNCTAD's World Investment Report



REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh's historically low foreign direct investment, which had dropped 10.8 percent to \$2.6 billion last year, is unlikely to pick up in the near future as investment commitments remain lukewarm, according to the UNCTAD.

The announced greenfield investment projects in 2020, an indication of FDI trends

over the next few years, contracted 87 percent in Bangladesh, said the World Investment Report 2021 of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which was released on Monday.

"In Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, FDI inflows will take longer to recover, as investment commitments in these countries remained weak," the report said.

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Violence rules first phase of UP polls

3 killed, dozens hurt in 6 dists

STAR REPORT

At least three persons were killed and dozens injured in violence in six districts in the first phase of union parishad elections yesterday.

Meanwhile, independent candidates vying for chairman posts in several unions boycotted the polls, bringing allegations of vote rigging by Awami League-nominated candidates.

A total of 204 UPs in 13 districts and two municipalities -- Jhalakathi and Setabganj in Dinajpur -- went to polls yesterday.

By-election to the Laxmipur-2 constituency was also held on the day.

In a statement in the evening, the Election Commission said that apart from some "untoward" incidents, yesterday's elections across the country were held in a peaceful manner.

Our correspondents in different districts reported incidents of violence.

In Barishal, a voter was killed in a clash between supporters of two member candidates in Khanjapur union of Gournadi upazila.

The dead was identified as Mauj Ali Mia, 64, of the same union.

Police and witnesses said supporters of two candidates -- Montu Hawladar and Firoz Mridha -- clashed around noon over casting of fake votes at Kamalapur Government Primary School Centre.

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A truck stand on the Turag

TARUN SARKAR

Trucks and covered vans stood parked in multiple rows, and goods were being loaded onto and unloaded from cargo vessels anchored nearby on the Turag river.

It is locally known as Diabari truck stand, which is on an illegally occupied riverbank, between pillars 13 and 18 demarcating the Turag's boundaries.

A connecting road has also been constructed near pillar 14. During a recent visit, trucks and covered vans were seen using this road to reach the stand.

This stretch of the Turag between Dhaur and Kholamora points is considered a major route for trade.

In some open spaces between the rows of parked trucks at the stand, there were piles of construction materials such as sand, bricks and iron rods.

A salon, cattle sheds, a rickshaw garage and other structures were also constructed in other open spaces of the truck stand.

According to environmentalists and local sources, the truck stand was controlled by the late MP Aslamul Haque who set it up around nine years ago.

After Aslamul Haque's death two months ago, they said, his elder brother and Jatiya Party presidium member Mofizul Haque Bebu took charge of the illegal truck stand.

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Trucks and lorries parked at the Diabari truck stand, built illegally by occupying the bank of the Turag river in the capital's Mirpur. A pillar demarcating Turag's boundaries can also be seen in the photo taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Retail power price went up 90pc in 11yrs

Bulk prices by 118pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The bulk price of electricity has shot up 118 percent while the retail price has gone up 89.63 percent in the last 11 years. The prices were hiked 10 times during that period.

Every year, the government pays Tk 7,000-8,000 crore in subsidies for the sector. Otherwise, the electricity prices would have been higher.

Journalist Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul gave the information in his keynote paper presented at a webinar, titled "Protection of Consumers' Rights in Energy Reformation", yesterday. The webinar was organised by Consumers Association of Bangladesh (Cab) and its online newspaper VoktaKantho.

He said earlier the Power Development Board was tasked with the distribution of electricity. "Later, the task was handed over to state-owned companies like Dhaka Power Distribution Company Ltd and Desco. In the process, the manpower increased and so did the manpower costs, leading the authorities to hike the prices."

Monjurul alleged that much information on various irregularities in the sector, however, remains undisclosed.

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