



The Daily Star

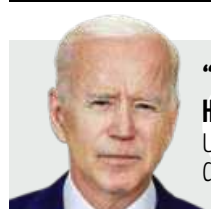
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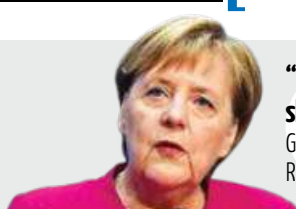
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"It is a sad day for media freedom in Hong Kong and around the world."
US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN ON FORCED CLOSURE OF PRO-DEMOCRACY APPLE DAILY



"It was not possible to agree today that we should meet immediately at the top level."
GERMAN CHANCELLOR ANGELA MERKEL AFTER EU LEADERS REBUFF GERMAN-FRENCH PUSH FOR PUTIN SUMMIT



"There will come a point, yes, where it will be very hard to return back to the standards set by the JCPOA."
US SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY BLINKEN ON IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL

LOCKDOWN

Govt announces nationwide strict shutdown from Monday for a week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country will be put under a complete lockdown for seven days from Monday to stem the surge in Covid-19 cases.

This time, nobody will be allowed to step out of home except for emergencies, said a statement from the Press Information Department (PID) yesterday evening.

Later, Farhad Hossain, state minister for public administration, told The Daily Star that members of the army and the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) along with the police would be deployed to ensure proper enforcement of the lockdown.

This is the first time the government has used the word "lockdown" while announcing nationwide Covid-19 curbs, indicating the strict nature of the restrictions about to be put in place.

In all previous announcements relating to the curbs, it had talked about imposing restrictions on public and traffic movement.

The fresh announcement came a day after the National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Covid-19 recommended "a complete nationwide shutdown" for 14

Army to be deployed to assist police, BGB in enforcing the lockdown

People asked not to go out of home without emergencies

Govt, private offices will remain closed, movement of vehicles will be halted

No restrictions on offices providing emergency services, vehicles carrying essential goods, ambulances, vehicles used in providing health services, and media

days in the face of a deepening health crisis.

Asked what they meant by a complete shutdown, Prof Mohammad Sahidullah, chief of the NTAC, said, "It means all should stay home. Everything will be closed except for emergency services."

The PID statement said all government and private offices, except for those providing emergency services, would remain closed during the seven-day lockdown.

"All vehicles, excluding those carrying essential goods, will be kept off the roads. Only ambulances and vehicles used for providing health services will be allowed to run," said the statement.

The press will also be out of the lockdown's purview, it said.

The details on how the lockdown will be enforced will be announced by the government today, according to the statement.

The lockdown was announced hours after the health directorate reported 108 deaths from Covid-19, the second highest daily deaths in the country since the first coronavirus case was confirmed in March last year.

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Covid patient Shanu Mia, 58, is being wheeled on to an ambulance while his family members look on outside the Covid unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday. Shanu would be taken to a private hospital in Banasree as there was no ICU bed available at the DMCH.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Country logs 2nd highest daily deaths
108 die, 5,869 more test Covid positive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh recorded 108 more deaths from Covid-19 in 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, which was the second highest death in a single day since the first positive cases were confirmed in the country on March 8 last year.

The highest number of daily deaths was 112 on April 19.

With yesterday's figure, the death toll now stands at 13,976.

On the other hand, 5,869 new cases were found in the 24 hours, taking the total number of infected people to 878,804, says a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services.

The positivity rate also jumped to 21.22 percent yesterday, which is the highest in the last 69 days. On April 17, the infection rate was 21.46 percent, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

Some 27,653 samples were tested across the country in 24 hours.

Among the 108 deceased, 75 were men and 33 women. Of them, one was aged

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Govt scraps 10 coal power projects

Green activists hail shifting towards cleaner energy

PINAKI ROY

The prime minister has approved a proposal to scrap 10 coal-fired power plants that were okayed earlier.

The power and energy ministry proposed scrapping the projects as the construction work made no progress in years, State Minister Nasrul Hamid told The Daily Star.

The coal-fired power plant in Payra is generating electricity while construction work in Rampal and Matarbari are making progress, the state minister said.

"Our current plan is to generate between 10,000MW and 12,000MW of electricity from coal by 2030," the state minister said.

The 10 discarded projects are among the 18 planned coal-fired plants that were approved after 2008.

"Now we are planning to use liquefied natural gas [LNG] and petroleum to generate power. But the government has yet to make a plan on how an LNG-fired power plant can be set up," he said.

The scrapped projects are: a 522MW plant in Munshiganj, a 282MW plant in Dhaka, 282MW in Chattogram, 1,320MW in Moheskhal, 1,320MW in Ashuganj, 1,200MW in Gaibandha, 1,200MW in



Matarbari phase-2, a 700MW Singapore-Bangladesh joint-venture, a 1,200MW CPGCL-Sumitomo Corporation joint-venture, and a 1,320MW Bangladesh-Malaysia joint-venture.

The government may scrap one or two other power plant projects if the construction does not make desired progress, said an official of the ministry.

One unit of the 1,320MW power plant in Payra is generating electricity. It is a Bangladesh-China joint venture. Physical work is making progress for the 1,320MW plant in Rampal, 1,224MW in Chattogram, 307MW in Barguna, and 1,200MW in Matarbari and 1,200MW in Cox's Bazar.

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RAPE, KILLING OF GIRL
Suspect killed in 'gunfight' with police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A man killed in a "gunfight" between police and criminals in Rajshahi's Godagari upazila early yesterday might have been involved in the rape and murder of a class-IV female student on Sunday, the law enforcers said.

The deceased was Md Shamim, 21, of the upazila's Baobari village, said Iftekhaer Alam, additional superintendent of police in the district.

The "gunfight" took place around 2:00am when a team from Kakonhat Police Investigation Centre was patrolling Lalitnagar area, said Iftekhaer, also spokesperson for the district police.

Sensing police presence, some criminals opened fire at the law enforcers prompting them to fire back, triggering the "gun battle", the police official added.

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MODERNA VACCINES FROM COVAX
2.5m doses arrive within 10 days

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Bangladesh will get 2.5 million doses of Moderna Covid vaccine within 10 days under the Covax facility, a global vaccine alliance.

Covax has written to the government, saying the shots will be sent as part of its commitment.

This will be the second consignment of Covid jabs from the vaccine alliance.

"Covax has recently informed us about the Moderna vaccine shots. We will receive those in seven to 10 days," Health Minister Zahid Maleque told The Daily Star yesterday.

The doses will help intensify the ongoing vaccination campaign, he said. The minister also mentioned that the first shipment of the Sinopharm vaccine shots that Bangladesh purchased from China will arrive in the first week of the next month.

Bangladesh is yet to approve Moderna Covid vaccine for emergency use, but health officials yesterday said it would get authorisation soon.

The Covax facility is a global initiative coordinated by the World Health Organization, the Vaccine Alliance Gavi, and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations.

It is working to ensure that low- and middle-income countries have equitable access to Covid vaccines.

Under the facility, Bangladesh was supposed to get this year 6.8 crore vaccine doses, which would cover around 20 percent of its population. But it has so far received only one consignment of 1.06 lakh doses of the Pfizer vaccine.

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'EXTORTION MONEY'
Food official assaulted by 'MP's men for refusal to pay'
Two arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

A government official of the food department was assaulted in Shaynalpara area in Natore's Bagatipara upazila allegedly by the men of the local ruling party lawmaker on Thursday night.

Sirajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Bagatipara Police Station, said the victim -- Rafiqul Islam, OCLSD of Lalpur upazila -- filed a case in this regard yesterday morning.

Meanwhile, police arrested two accused -- Mohammad Rasel, 35, and Mohammad Kalam, 34, in this connection.

The victim said he went to meet Natore-1 MP Shahidul Islam Bakul at his residence on Thursday as he was summoned over the phone.

"I discussed some official matters with the lawmaker and then he left the place," the victim said.

After the MP, the victim also tried to leave the

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Thomas Hawladar, a schoolteacher, was supposed to be in a classroom now. Instead, he is out in the open selling vegetables on a rickshaw van to support his family of five. His income has dropped significantly since the pandemic hit the country last year. The photo was taken in the capital's Mohghbazar on Thursday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

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PERILOUS JOURNEY TO EUROPE
264 Bangladeshis rescued in Med

They were adrift at sea after their boat broke down off Tunisian coast

STAR REPORT

At least 264 Bangladeshis were rescued in the Mediterranean off the Tunisian coast on Thursday when they were trying to sail across the sea to Europe, according to the Bangladesh embassy in Libya.

They were among 267 people found adrift in the sea which is widely used by traffickers as a route for illegal migration from North African countries to rich European countries, including Italy, Greece and Spain.

It was unclear which European country the migrants had intended to enter.

Tunisia's coastguard said the migrants, including three Egyptians, had been stranded at sea after their boat broke down, reports AFP.

Asaduzzaman Kabir, labour welfare counsellor at the Bangladesh embassy in Tripoli, yesterday said they were in constant contact with International Organisation for Migration (IOM), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and other local authorities in Tunisia regarding the wellbeing of the Bangladeshis.

Azzouz Samri, IOM's chief of mission in Tunisia, said: "We received a call from the authorities to assist a group of 267 people rescued at sea ... They were rescued and brought by the Tunisian national coast guard to the port of EL Kefet at Ben Guerdane locality. The IOM team in Tunisia provided food and medical assistance at the port, provided transport to a centre identified by the authorities for the confinement period of five days. The IOM Tunisia is also doing the Covid-19 RT-PCR test for the rescued."

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