

AL candidate

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Three candidates -- Jatiya Party nominated Mostakur Rahman, Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (Inu) nominated Abu Hanif, and Bangladesh Nationalist Front nominated AYM Kamrul Islam -- withdrew their candidatures on Wednesday.

The three candidates cited the Covid-19 situation as the reason for withdrawal, said an official of the returning office.

Shahjalal earlier said that the returning office cancelled nominations of two independent candidates Mohammad Moniruzzaman and Ruhul Amin Sarkar.

Moniruzzaman's nomination was cancelled because he submitted signatures of four persons who were not voters of the Dhaka-14 constituency, while Ruhul Amin had submitted incomplete nomination forms.

According to the Representation of the People Order, 1972, independent candidates must submit signatures of one percent of the total voters in their constituency along with their applications.

Moniruzzaman appealed to the Election Commission against RO's decision to cancel his nomination paper and the EC upheld the RO's decision after a hearing, said Shahjalal.

The Dhaka-14 seat fell vacant following AL MP Aslamul Hoque's death on April 4.

BGB detains

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the press release added.

Based on Younus's statement, BGB then arrested the trafficker, said Lt Col Selim Reza, captain of BGB 49th Battalion.

Both Younus and Anisur were handed over to Benapole Port Police Station. A case was also filed with the station in this connection.

Florida prays

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whose mother Judy Spiegel is missing, told CNN yesterday.

The last time Spiegel communicated with her mom was Wednesday night, when her mother excitedly texted her that she had bought a dress online for Spiegel's daughter, her granddaughter.

Hours later, early Thursday morning, a large section of the Champlain Towers South condominium in Surfside, a barrier island town across Biscayne Bay from the city of Miami, crumbled to the ground, authorities said.

"The dress is in the mail and I just want my mom to give it to her," Rachel Spiegel told CNN, wiping away tears.

Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Assistant Fire Chief Ray Jadallah said yesterday that rescuers had heard sounds in the rubble overnight, but said it could be either falling debris or people tapping.

Video captured by a security camera nearby showed an entire side of the building suddenly folding in two sections, one after the other, at about 1:30 am (0530 GMT) on Thursday, throwing up clouds of dust.

"We are listening for sounds, human sounds and tapping," Jadallah said, as rescuers use shovels and jackhammers to tunnel under the debris to find pockets where survivors could be.

On Thursday, search teams detected sounds of banging and other noises but no voices coming from the mounds of debris.

Mariela Porras, a friend of a woman who lived in the building with her young daughter and is now missing, said she has not abandoned hope that the two were still alive beneath the rubble.

"I vacillate between hope and I'm heartbroken," Porras told CNN.

Porras said she has called, texted and visited a reunification center, but has not heard from her friend, a photographer who was working to get a real estate license.

Mayor Cava yesterday said that rescue teams were "incredibly motivated" to find anyone who might have survived the collapse.

"We still have hope that we will find people alive," the mayor said.

US President Joe Biden approved an emergency declaration in the state of Florida and ordered federal assistance to supplement state and local response efforts.

Dinosaurs

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these dinosaurs weren't just living in the Arctic, they were actually able to reproduce in the Arctic."

Researchers first discovered dinosaur remains at the frigid polar latitudes in the 1950s, regions once thought to be too hostile for reptilian life.

This led to two competing hypotheses: Either the dinosaurs were permanent polar residents, or they migrated to the Arctic and Antarctic to take advantage of seasonally abundant warm resources, and possibly to reproduce.

The new study is the first to show unequivocal evidence that at least seven dinosaur species were capable of nesting at extremely high latitudes -- in this case the Upper Cretaceous Prince Creek Formation which lies at 80-85 degrees North.



Former Afghan interpreters, who worked with US troops in Afghanistan, hold signs during a demonstration about their safety, in front of the US embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Ventilator 'bank' boosts Covid-19 fight in Nepal's hospitals

APP, Kathmandu

A ventilator "bank" where hospitals can rent critical care machines for Covid-19 patients has given Nepal's cash-strapped healthcare system a much-needed lifeline.

The Himalayan nation, like its South Asian neighbours, experienced a spike in infections in April and May with hospitals overwhelmed and medical supplies running low.

As the infectious disease started to spread across the impoverished nation a year ago, Nepal only had 840 ventilators for a population of nearly 30 million, according to government data.

Most of the ventilators -- needed to help severely ill Covid-19 patients breathe -- were in the capital Kathmandu, leaving regional and rural hospitals vulnerable.

While daily infections have since declined from a peak of more than

9,000 cases in mid-May, authorities say hospitals remain under pressure.

But Nepal Ventilator Services, a non-profit that has bought 85 of the machines through donations since the start of the pandemic last year, has helped to meet the surge in demand.

"Nepal is chronically, insufficiently equipped with machines like ventilators," the group's co-founder, 42-year-old doctor Bishal Dhakal, told AFP.

"It does not have even required numbers, which is about 2,000 to 3,000 machines for a 30-million population of Nepal."

The heart surgeon turned general practitioner reached out to donors for funding in April last year and money poured in, allowing the organisation to buy 20 ventilators to rent out to hospitals at cost.

Bhim Hospital in the country's south, which had one ventilator, loaned two from Dhakal's group in

August for three months.

"Our patients needed ventilators but we did not have enough budget to immediately buy any," the government hospital's medical superintendent, Shakuntala Gupta, told AFP.

"The bureaucratic process for an approval is also long."

Since then, the ventilators have been used for nearly 1,500 patients across the country.

Hospitals are charged 3,000 rupees (\$25) per day to cover maintenance and transportation costs.

Karuna Hospital in Kathmandu, which has been renting eight ventilators since April this year, said the "bank" was life-saving.

"At the peak, almost every patient who was admitted in the ICU required ventilator support," the private hospital's chief executive, Ram Kumar Shrestha, told AFP.

"If the ventilator 'bank' did not

exist, the death rate would perhaps be beyond our imagination, not just here but in many places of Nepal."

Laxmi Rokaya, 29, was struggling to breathe a week after she was infected in May.

Her brother, Kunsang Magar, was unable to find a spare ventilator in Kathmandu until they reached Karuna.

"They (Nepal Ventilator Services) rescued us. I don't know if we would have found a ventilator without them," Magar told AFP, adding that Rokaya was placed on a ventilator for two days and released from hospital just after a week later.

Dhakal said all the organisation's 85 ventilators were loaned out during the peak.

The country has reported nearly 630,000 infections and over 8,900 deaths so far. Even as the second wave wanes, officials are concerned the third is around the corner.

Bangladesh shouldn't worry about debt trap

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"I think you've an excellent system and you've excellent officials and ministers to take care of that. So, never worry about that," he said.

Referring to an article he read regarding Sri Lanka's debt situation, the Chinese envoy said the total Chinese debt accounts for only less than 8 percent of the whole debt of that country and of this 8 percent, much less is related to the Belt and Road projects.

The ambassador also said there is government-to-government debt, which is normally a soft, concessional loan with a very low interest rate and very long repayment period.

CPD Distinguished Fellow Debapriya Bhattacharya said China has emerged as a big financial investor in Bangladesh involving major projects which have major infrastructural implications.

Now there is a debated issue across the world whether this kind

of a financial flow is a "debt trap" for the countries like Bangladesh as it happened in Sri Lanka, he said.

"Thankfully, Bangladesh's external debt remains moderately manageable and most of the country's debts are from the multinational agencies and at this moment it is not China."

The economist, however, said they should be really mindful about the debt repayment issue although they are in a comfortable position at this stage. Bangladesh's total outstanding debt burden is well under 40 percent of its GDP.

"But there are projections that this debt issue would be a challenging point for the Bangladesh-China relationship beyond 2024," he added.

Ambassador Li said Bangladesh and China need to advance the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). He said there is no doubt that closer cooperation under BRI will strengthen strategic partnership of cooperation.

Bangladesh is the first South Asian

country to sign up for BRI, which was first proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013.

The Chinese envoy said China never took India as a "strategic rival", rather considered India a good neighbour of the country.

He said the two countries are maintaining good relations for more than 2,000 to 3,000 years. "Any Chinese intellectual, who is well-educated, would have a special feeling. A good feeling, towards India -- that's something untold publicly probably."

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER
Responding to a question about technology transfer, the ambassador said there are more and more technology transfers happening between China and Bangladesh.

He mentioned that a couple of years ago, China was not used to purchasing any garment from Bangladesh. But these days, he said, a lot of readymade garment products are being exported to China from Bangladesh.

Dreams shattered

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The site of the housing project, in the middle of local Karbari Beel in Mahadan union, remains waterlogged for almost half the year, he said.

Rahman's wife Taslima Begum said they used to live on others' land earlier and were happy to get their own house.

"I work as a day labourer as my husband is ill and the current situation has put the whole family into deep misery," lamented Taslima.

When the Subornakhali river, a tributary of the Jamuna, swells during the monsoon, water enters the beel making it uninhabitable, said 40-year-old Lucky Begum who along with her

two children received a house three months ago.

Recent rainfall that led to the flooding in the beel forced Hamida Akter to leave her house too. Even when the water recedes, risks remain as cracks have developed in the walls of many houses, alleged Hamida.

These displaced families also said no official has visited the area since the start of their sufferings following the heavy rainfall recently.

They alleged that before constructing the houses, a base of reasonable height was not created by earth filling to protect the residents from the waterlogging.

Chairman of Mahadan union

parishad Anisur Rahman said at the beginning of the project, he protested the site selection in a low-lying area, but no one bothered to do anything about it.

Sarishabari upazila parishad Chairman Giasuddin Pathan said the houses were built on ground comparatively lower than that of the water level following heavy showers. He said before selecting the site, the project implementing body should have considered that local rivers overflow during deluges.

Talking to this correspondent, Shihab Uddin Ahmed, upazila nirbahi officer in Sarishabari, said most areas in the upazila are low-lying;

as the Upazila Ashrayan Taskforce Implementation Committee got suitable khas land in the Karbari area, adjacent to a local canal, it selected the site for the project.

The waterlogging might have resulted from a temporary problem with the canal embankment and the water will soon recede and the situation will ease, said the UNO.

About the residents alleging cracks developing in the walls of many houses, the UNO said those would be repaired.

The UNO added he has already sent relief, including rice, to the affected families and will provide other necessary support.

'Brutal' 3rd Covid

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In Australia, which has been one of the most successful nations in containing the coronavirus after shutting its borders, around a million people in four eastern and central Sydney neighbourhoods were ordered to stay home for at least a week.

Sixty-five infections have been reported in a flare-up linked to a limousine driver infected about two weeks ago when he transported an international flight crew from Sydney airport to a quarantine hotel.

The premier of the state of New South Wales, Gladys Berejiklian, called it the "scariest period" since the pandemic began.

It was a dramatic development for a city that had returned to relative normality after months of recording very few local cases.

Bondi local Alana Trepper said "to be honest, I probably think that it should have happened a couple of days ago because there's been a pretty decent spread the last few days."

ISRAEL PUTS MASKS BACK ON
Israel, which has prided itself on having one of the world's most successful vaccination campaigns, has seen infections surge since dropping a requirement to wear masks in enclosed public places 10 days ago.

After four days of more than 100 new cases a day -- including 227 on Thursday -- the health ministry reversed the decision.

The head of Israel's pandemic response taskforce, Nachman Ash, said the rise was likely due to the Delta variant, adding that the increasing cases were not yet matched by a parallel rise in hospitalisations or deaths.

Fear of Covid

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According to the Department of Livestock Services (DLS), a total of 1.19 crore sacrificial cattle are prepared for slaughter for Eid. Last year, over 1.1 crore were slaughtered across the country.

Although the online cattle market has become popular lately, most of the animals are sold at temporary and permanent cattle markets. This year, 23 such markets will be set up in Dhaka for sacrificial animals.

DLS Deputy Director (Farm) Zeenat Sultana said over 50 percent of cattle found at Dhaka's cattle markets comes from other districts.

"A good number of cattle comes to Dhaka from Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions," she said.

A significant number also comes from Kushtia, Meherpur, Chuadanga and Jhenidah of Khulna division.

An analysis of data three weeks prior to last year's Eid-ul-Azha and the corresponding period this year paints a grim picture of infection in the north and north-eastern divisions -- great sources for cattle.

On July 10, 2020, Dhaka had an infection rate of 25 percent while the infection rate was 34 percent in Khulna, 28 percent in Rajshahi and 24 percent in Rangpur.

Since the pandemic hit the country in March 2020, Dhaka had been the worst-affected division. But that scenario changed when the Delta variant, first found in India, was detected in Bangladesh.

On June 24 this year, DGHS statistics show the infection rate was 78 percent in Rangpur, 22 percent in Rajshahi and 78 percent in Khulna divisions. The infection rate was 27 percent in Dhaka on the day.

This month, Covid-19 deaths of the seven other divisions combined was around four times that of Dhaka's.

On June 24, 68 of the 81 Covid deaths recorded were in divisions other than Dhaka, according to the DGHS.

Experts predict there will be mobilisation of at least one crore people over the purchase of cattle.

Like the previous year, they are afraid people will not follow health guidelines properly at cattle markets this year when the delta variant of Covid-19 is rattling the country.

"The top level of the government assumes its duty is done by declaring restrictions. It had not given importance to people's participation in following health guidelines. As a result, people do not comply with their directives," said renowned virologist Prof Dr Nazrul Islam, adding that similar things will happen in the cattle market.

"We needed to create awareness among people through community programmes at field level so both traders and buyers who will flock to the cattle markets would follow it," he said.

MEASURES BEING TAKEN
Director General of DLS Dr Sheikh Azizur Rahman said, "We've given a proposal to transport cattle on wagon trains if the lockdown is continued."

They will discuss it at the inter-ministerial meeting that will be held on June 27, he said.

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Mayor Atiqul Islam said there will be one-way passage for customers at the cattle market.

Pointing out higher infection rates in Rajshahi, Satkhira and Khulna, he said, "We will write to the department of livestock to stop the entrance of cattle from highly infected districts to Dhaka."

Dhaka South mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh said there is an unwillingness among people to wear masks.

"We maintained health guidelines in cattle markets last year and will ensure it this time also," he said.

they would keep in close touch in future.

APPEAL TO TUNKU TO HELP STOP GENOCIDE

The acting president of Bangladesh Syed Nazrul Islam today sent a telegram to Tunku Abdul Rahman, general secretary of the Islamic Conference at Jeddah to use its influence and authority to put an immediate end to the genocide in Bangladesh. The telegram, copies of which were sent to all members of the organisation including King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, said, "Innocent people have been killed in hundreds of thousands. Houses burnt and looted.

Womenfolk raped and molested -- all because they had exercised their right to franchise ... to secure an end to the exploitation perpetrated on them over the last 23 years.

"Seventy-five million people of Bangladesh, nearly 80 percent of whom are Muslims, declared independence only when the ruthless and dictatorial Yahya regime had unleashed a treacherous war on helpless people to undo the verdict of the election," added the telegram.

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