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EID CATTLE MARKETS Fear of Covid influx looms

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN and HELEMI ALAM

The government's efforts to protect the proverbial heart of the country, its capital, from a worsening Covid-19 situation could be foiled by the influx of people from riskier districts to cattle markets in the lead-up to Eid-ul-Azha.

Experts fear that Dhaka, currently in a better position than other districts in terms of infections and deaths, may see a rise in Covid-19 cases surrounding the religious festival.

"Dhaka has been reaping the benefit of neighbouring districts being locked down, but the mass gathering at cattle markets will have a negative impact on us," said renowned virologist Prof Dr Nazrul Islam, former vice-chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

Meanwhile, the government announced, through a statement of the Press Information Department last night, that there will be a countrywide seven-day 'strict' lockdown from Monday. However, how that will impact on the influx due to the cattle markets is as yet unclear.

Director General of Directorate General of Health Services Prof Dr Khurshid Alam said the situation may go out of control if the number of Covid-19 patients increases as doctors, nurses and health staffers are already exhausted.

"Our doctors and nurses have been relentlessly providing services to Covid-19 patients. They are completely burned out. We'll not be able to provide services if the infection spreads," he said.

While health experts are raising the red flag, the top brass of government organisations concerned are keeping faith in asking people to follow health guidelines, the efficacy of which is not clearly evident based on past experiences.

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A large number of shoppers seen crowding close together at the fish market below Buriganga Bridge-2 in Adanagar area of South Keraniganj. Amid a countrywide surge in coronavirus cases and deaths, traders and shoppers alike are neither maintaining social distance nor wearing masks. The photo was taken yesterday morning.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

HUMAN TRAFFICKING BGB detains 'member of int'l racket'

Rescues victim in Benapole

STAR REPORT

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) arrested a suspected member of an international organ smuggling racket in the Benapole check-post area on Thursday.

BGB also rescued a victim while he was being trafficked by the arrestee to India, according to a press release issued on Thursday night.

The arrestee is Anisur Rahman, 27, of Gazipur.

The victim Younus Ali, 26, is a readymade garment worker in Dhaka. He alleged that Anisur, a kidney smuggler, threatened him at gunpoint and asked him to go to India.

Anisur brought Younus from Dhaka to Jashore by air. Then from Jashore to Benapole on a private car, he said.

Younus begged for help from a member of BGB near no man's land in Benapole at the first chance he got.

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Bangladesh shouldn't worry about debt trap Says Chinese envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming has said Bangladesh should never worry about bad debt or the so-called debt trap.

"I would say that you've managed foreign debt very, very well, and there's no such bad debt so far at all. You've earned a very, very high credit [recognition] internationally in terms of [managing] international debts. So, never worry about that," he said.

The envoy made the remarks while responding to a question at an online symposium titled "Bangladesh-China Relations: Prognosis for the Future" hosted by the Cosmos Foundation on Thursday evening.

The example of Sri Lanka came up in the context of a country that fell into a "debt trap" as a result of public investment projects financed by China.

Ambassador Li, who delivered the keynote speech at the programme, however said there was no proven evidence that China created any "debt trap" in any country, including Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

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ROAD TO FREEDOM THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Austerity budget set in Pakistan

JUNE 26, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

PAKISTAN DECRIES BRITISH AID

Pakistan, faced with the prospect of sharply reduced foreign aid during the coming year, announced a budget today that called for stringent national austerity but provided substantially more money for the military.

Mirza Muzaffar Ahmad, President Yahya Khan's economic adviser, said Pakistan was able to do without British economic assistance. In an explanation of budget, he said Britain's share of aid amounted to 7 per cent or about £10 million. "We could do without these £10 million or more," he added.

Ahmad had warned Pakistanis in his budget speech that Pakistan might have to manage without it. He emphasised that Pakistan would not let foreign pressures influence her domestic political situation. Asked which countries had tried to influence decisions, he said that only Sir Alec Douglas-Home was on record as having said that British assistance was linked with a political settlement of East Pakistan's crisis.

The budget introduced measures to cut government and private spending, reduce domestic consumption, increase exports, and conserve foreign exchange.

US STATE DEPARTMENT TELEGRAM

In a telegram sent to the US embassy in India, the state department provided a brief of the discussion with UNHCR Chief Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan who had recently visited Pakistan and India. Sadruddin indicated grave consequences which could flow from

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CONDO COLLAPSE Florida prays for 'miracle' with 159 missing

Death toll hits 4

REUTERS, Surfside

Rescue workers scouring the debris of a collapsed condo building in a Miami suburb said they heard sounds in the rubble overnight, as officials yesterday raised the number of people unaccounted for to 159 and the confirmed death toll to four.

Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava told reporters that three more bodies were pulled from the wreckage overnight. Another person was reported to have died on Thursday. The mayor also said the number of presumed missing had increased from the 99 reported missing on Thursday.

"I'm praying for a miracle," Rachel Spiegel,

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Dinosaurs thrived in ancient Arctic



AFP, Washington

Dinosaur species large and small made the Arctic their year-round home and probably developed wintering strategies like hibernation or growing insulating feathers, according to a new study.

The paper, published Thursday in the journal Current Biology, is the result of more than a decade's worth of painstaking fossil excavations, and puts to rest the notion that the ancient reptiles lived only in hotter climes.

"A couple of these new sites we found in the last few years turned up something unexpected, and that is they're producing baby bones and teeth," lead author Patrick Druckenmiller of the University of Alaska Museum of the North told AFP.

"That's amazing because it demonstrates that

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DHAKA-14 BY POLLS AL candidate gets elected unopposed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League nominee for Dhaka-14 by-polls Aga Khan Mintu was elected unopposed in the constituency.

The uncontested victory of Aga Khan Mintu was confirmed by Dhaka-14 by-election's Returning Officer Mahfuza Akter through a gazette notification yesterday.

Assistant Returning Officer Mohammad Shahjalal confirmed the matter to The Daily Star yesterday afternoon.

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PRAYER TIMING JUNE 26

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-54 8-17
JAMAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-57 8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

ASHRAYAN PROJECT Dreams shattered

21 houses given to landless people get flooded throwing them out in open

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Twenty-one houses recently built in Jamalpur's Sarishabari upazila under a government project for the homeless are already inundated following the recent rains.

The houses, constructed at a cost of Tk 35,70,000, had been handed over to these families earlier this year.

The 21 landless families who finally got their own houses under the Ashrayan project were forced to live under the open sky due to flooding, they said.

Abdur Rahman and four other members of his family moved into their house on May 18. But a heavy rainfall last week forced them to leave and stay in a makeshift tent made of plastic along the road.

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Houses built under the Ashrayan-2 project, which gives houses to landless and homeless families, in Jamalpur's Sarishabari upazila have been flooded during monsoon. Twenty-one families who received the houses recently are currently displaced due to the flooding. The photo was taken on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AMINUL ISLAM

'Brutal' 3rd Covid wave hits Africa

Delta variant forces Australia, Israel to impose new curbs; Chinese shots 'less effective' on the variant

AGENCIES

Australia and Israel, which had been successful in fending off Covid-19, reimposed restrictions yesterday as cases surged of the highly contagious Delta variant which also threatened Africa with a brutal third wave.

With just under 5.3 million reported cases and around 139,000 deaths among its nearly 1.3 billion people, Africa is still the world's least-affected continent after Oceania, according to an AFP tally.

So far African nations have been spared disasters comparable to Brazil or India. But the pandemic is resurging at an alarming rate in at least 12 countries, with continental cases expected to hit a record peak in around three weeks.

"The third wave is picking up speed, spreading faster, hitting harder," World Health Organization Africa director Matshidiso Moeti warned Thursday. "The latest surge threatens to be Africa's worst yet."

Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) director John Nkengasong described the third wave as "extremely brutal" and "very devastating."

The Delta variant, first detected in India, has so far been reported in 14 African countries, making up the bulk of new cases in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda, according to the WHO.

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