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Your Right to Know

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Swinging between lockdowns

Lack of coordination writ large in govt measures

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

When the cabinet division decided late into Saturday evening, that the nationwide "total and complete" lockdown would be postponed from June 28 to July 1, and the interim period would consist of a limited-scale or partial countrywide lockdown, many had this question: What does "limited-scale" lockdown even mean?

As the country enforces a partial lockdown from today, the cabinet division yesterday issued a circular outlining how the nation would operate over the next three days leading up to the actual lockdown on July 1.

The new decision comes amid travel restrictions across the country from June 16-July 15.

The government has yet to issue a directive regarding the "total and complete lockdown" even though the Press Information Department earlier said that the cabinet Division would issue a gazette regarding the lockdown on Saturday.

As per yesterday's gazette on the three-day partial lockdown, all forms of transport, except rickshaws, will be banned. The government and private offices may remain open with only the essential staff.

"The law enforcement agencies will patrol the streets to ensure this," said the

CURBS FOR JUNE 28-30

- All public transport will be off the roads
- Shopping malls, tourism centres, resorts to be closed
- Restaurants to stay open for takeouts only
- Police, BGB, army personnel to ensure lockdown from Thursday

circular.

It added that organisations must provide transport for their employees deemed essential.

Shopping malls, resorts and tourist destinations, community centres and places of entertainment will be closed during this period.

Restaurants will only be allowed to cater to takeaway orders.

The government will take steps to raise awareness about masks and take legal action if need be.

Vehicles carrying goods will be allowed

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RESTRICTIONS IGNORED... Hundreds of people getting on and off a ferry at Munshiganj's Shimulia terminal yesterday afternoon. People have been ignoring government restrictions barring movement of people in the districts around the capital to avert further spike in Covid-19 deaths and cases, as well as those of social distancing and mask wearing.

PHOTO: SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Hasina seeks cooperation from all

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for cooperation from all as she reiterated her government's resolve to overcome the coronavirus pandemic.

"We will be able to face the present situation [of the coronavirus] Insha'Allah, we have that belief in us and for this purpose, we want cooperation from all," she said.

She said this while giving prestigious Bangabandhu Jatiya Krishi Puroshkar-1424, (Bangabandhu National Agriculture Award-1424), the highest state recognition in the agriculture sector to 32 individuals and organisations.

The prime minister said that the country is now passing through the second wave of the coronavirus.

In this connection, she said that the number of infections has increased massively while the number of deaths

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Blast kills at least seven, injures 50

Fire service officials suspect AC unit explosion in city's Moghbazar area

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least seven people were killed and over 50 others were injured in an explosion in Dhaka's Moghbazar area yesterday.

Debashis Bardhan, deputy director of (operation and maintenance) of fire service and civil defence, told the The Daily Star, "The explosion took place around 7:35pm at a building on Outer Circular Road. We are primarily suspecting that an air conditioner unit exploded.

"Many people have been injured ... we need more time to get details," he added.

Fifteen fire engines were conducting the rescue operations around 9:30pm when this report was filed.

Around 10 of the injured had burn injuries and were admitted to the Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery. At least 40 others were in treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital emergency unit, said hospital sources.

Of the injured, fifteen were said to be in critical condition, the sources added.

Eyewitness and fire service official said they were suspecting that the explosion took place on the ground floor of the building where an appliance store, an abattoir, a restaurant, and a sweetmeat shop are housed.

Accumulated gas in the appliance store could have exploded, an official of a bomb disposal unit that went to the spot speculated.

"We are analyzing the nature of the explosion ...," said Rahmatullah Chowdhury of the bomb disposal unit.

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Country logs highest daily deaths at 119

UNB, Dhaka

A total of 119 people died with Covid-19 in Bangladesh in 24 hours until yesterday morning, the biggest figure since the pandemic hit the country.

During the period, 5,268 more people came out positive with the deadly coronavirus in 24,400 sample tests.

The country's daily positivity rate fell to 21.59 percent yesterday from Saturday's 22.50 percent, according to the government data.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh's coronavirus fatality rate rose to 1.60 percent from Saturday's 1.59 percent.

The new numbers pushed the country's caseload to 888,406 while the death toll to 14,172 yesterday.

Barely two months ago, the country reported 112 deaths in a single day on April 19.

On Saturday, the death toll from Covid-19 in Bangladesh crossed 14,000 mark as health authorities reported 77 deaths.

To curb the spread of coronavirus, the government has imposed a countrywide

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Fear of hard days spurs mad rush

STAR REPORT

People in their thousands, mostly low-income ones, made desperate bids to leave the capital yesterday ahead of the nationwide complete lockdown from Thursday.

They boarded trucks, pick-ups, three-wheelers, human hauliers and rode motorbikes to go back to their village homes, disregarding the health safety rules.

Most of the home-goers were low-income people who feared that they would lose their livelihoods in the city and face starvation if the lockdown continues till the Eid-ul-Azha. So they have no way, but to leave Dhaka.

Many others who came to the capital from different districts for treatment or other emergencies were also seen heading for their homes.

The government is set to enforce nationwide strict restrictions from today till Wednesday and a complete lockdown from Thursday to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus.

With public transport suspended to and from seven districts around the capital, many took three-wheelers and human hauliers and even got on trucks and pick-ups to reach their destinations in those districts, leading to traffic congestions on different roads.

Meanwhile, thousands of home-goers, including women and children, waited for hours at Shimulia and Paturia ferry terminals to cross the Padma.

They took detours and changed vehicles multiple times to go home. Many others walked long distances to reach their destinations.

The exodus began on Saturday after the announcement of a complete lockdown amid a surge in Covid deaths and infections across the country.

In a statement on Friday, the Press Information Department said nobody would be allowed outdoors unless there is an emergency. This was the

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A relative of a patient in front of Dhaka Medical College Hospital's Covid-19 unit resting her head on a pillar. Their worries have increased along with the rise in infections and deaths caused by the virus. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

BUYING VACCINES Momen doubts it'll be smooth

Says global politics at play

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen expressed scepticism about procuring vaccines smoothly saying bilateral cooperation is not the only deciding factor and that issues of global politics are at play.

"We have discovered, with shock and disappointment, that global politics and affluence-power nexus have the overpowering dominance in the global society...", he said at a webinar titled "Revisiting Contemporary Peace and Security Challenges in the South Asian Region", organised by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS).

It was attended by diplomats, academics and government officials.

Momen said due to the sudden rise in Covid-19 cases in neighbouring countries, it is imperative that South Asian nations receive their share of the vaccine without any strings attached.

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AstraZeneca tests booster jab against variants

AFP, London

AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford yesterday began new trials to test a modified vaccine against the Beta variant, which first emerged in South Africa.

The 'booster' vaccine's trial will involve around 2,250 participants from Britain, South Africa, Brazil and Poland.

They include people who have been fully vaccinated with two doses of the original Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine or an mRNA vaccine such as Pfizer as well as those who have not got the jab at all.

The new vaccine, known as AZD2816, has been designed using the same base as the main AstraZeneca shot but with minor genetic alterations to the spike protein based on the Beta variant.

"Testing booster doses of existing vaccines and new variant vaccines is important to ensure we are best prepared to stay ahead of the pandemic coronavirus, should their use be needed," said Andrew Pollard, chief investigator and director of the Oxford Vaccine Group at the University of Oxford.

Britain has had a successful vaccine

roll out programme, but experts do not know how long protection lasts.

"This study will provide vital evidence on whether further doses including 'tweaks' against new virus variants may be needed in the future," said Maheshi Ramasamy, Principal Investigator at the Oxford Vaccine Group.

Initial data from the trial is expected later this year.

Current vaccines are believed to be less effective against the Beta variant, although it is the Delta variant, which emerged in India, that is currently

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