

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



5,268
New cases in 24hrs



8,88,406
Total cases



14,172
Deaths



8,04,103
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



3,936,147
Deaths



181,725,175
Total cases

A mom’s ordeal with Covid positive infant

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

A one-and-a-half-month old girl has been infected with the coronavirus in a rare case of Covid-19 in an infant.

Her mother, who tested negative for the virus, checked into the Covid unit of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital on Saturday with the baby, who had started having breathing problems.

But getting a hospital for the infant named Afreen, who was asymptomatic after testing positive on June 20, was not straightforward.

Her mother, Mahbuba Khatun of Rajshahi city’s Chhoto Bongram area, went to two private hospitals, Rajshahi Royal Hospital and Rajshahi Christian Mission Hospital, but Afreen was denied admission to the hospitals as those did not have a Covid ward.

“Doctors denied treating my child when they heard she was infected with Covid-19. Why did they become doctors then?” Khatun told The Daily Star on Saturday.

Finding no way, Khatun, whose husband Arifur Rahman tested positive with Afreen, took her child to the RMCH.

The correspondent found Khatun, wearing a cheap copy of the KN95 mask, sat on the floor of the Covid

ward, surrounded by infected patients, with Afreen sleeping in her lap.

“She’s my child -- I can’t leave her alone. Who will be responsible if I am infected from staying here with covid patients?” a distraught Khatun asked.

Contacted, RMCH Director Shamim Yazdani said the hospital did not set up a separate Covid ward for children as the infection among them is very rare.

“We don’t see infected children much,” he said, adding that another child was admitted with covid-19 in May last.

Pediatricians were attending to Afreen although she was admitted to the Covid ward.

The mother was asked to strictly maintain health rules, he said, adding that samples of the child and her mother were taken for testing again at RT PCR laboratory, he added.

Meanwhile, the number of monthly deaths reached a new high on Sunday: in the first 27 days of June, 303 patients died at RMCH Covid ward.

As many as 434 patients were undergoing treatment against 357 beds of 12 wards of the hospital’s Covid unit on Sunday.

As the number of patients was still rising on Sunday, the hospital added a new ward with 48 beds.

Fear of hard days spurs it

FROM PAGE 1

In a statement on Friday, the Press Information Department said nobody would be allowed outdoors unless there is an emergency. This was the first time the government used the word “lockdown” while announcing coronavirus restrictions.

The announcement gave rise to an apprehension that the lockdown may be extended till the Eid-ul-Azha.

In a gazette notification yesterday, the Cabinet Division said all government and non-government organisations will be able to keep their offices open till Wednesday with a limited number of staffers.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said members of police, Border Guard Bangladesh and the army would be patrolling the streets to enforce the restrictions on public and vehicular movement from Thursday.

FEAR OF LOSING LIVELIHOOD
Fifty-year-old Amanat Mia, along with nine other rickshaw-pullers, was walking to Gabtoli bus terminal from Kalyanpur to get a vehicle to go to his village home in Satkhira.

Talking to this correspondent, he said they came to the capital last month with the hope of earning some money before the Eid. But the sudden announcement of lockdown dashed the hope, making things uncertain.

Fatema Jannat Moni, worker at a T-shirt printing factory in the capital’s Mirpur, was waiting at Gabtoli for a vehicle to return home in Nilphamari’s Dimla.

The 18-year-old woman who get a monthly salary of Tk 6,500 lived in a messin the area along with some of her co-workers.

“The factory owner recently told us that it will be closed during the lockdown and there will be no work. If the lockdown is extended, the factory will not open before the Eid. All my co-workers have already left the capital,” she told this newspaper.

Roni Hossain, a former worker at

a machinery factory in Gazipur, was waiting along with his wife and child at Shimulia ferry terminal to go to his village home in Barishal.

“The factory management sacked me and some other workers to minimise expenses. The job was my only source of earnings in the capital. I have no other choice but to go home with my wife and child,” the 40-year-old told our Munshiganj correspondent.

SUFFERINGS

Tengra Mia and his three family members were waiting at Gabtoli for a vehicle to go back to Jhenaidah.

The 70-year-old man recently underwent a surgery on his neck at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

“A car driver is asking for Tk 2,000 per person. The amount is four times the usual bus fare of Tk 500 each. We were not prepared for this sudden announcement of lockdown,” Tengra Mia’s younger brother Abdul Latif told this newspaper.

Law enforcers stopped scores of vehicles at various points on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in Gazipur to prevent people from entering the capital from surrounding districts. Many people either had to walk or get on small vehicles to reach their destinations.

Meanwhile, thousands of people crowded Shimulia-Banglabazar and Paturia-Daulatdia ferry terminals to go to the southern districts, crossing the Padma.

Our correspondent in Munshiganj reports that ferries at Shimulia were jam-packed with passengers who showed utter disregard for the health safety rules.

Zakir Hossain, Mawa traffic police in-charge, said the terminal was more crowded yesterday compared to that on Saturday.

“At least 400 vehicles are waiting for ferries. The crowd has become unmanageable and no one is following the health safety guidelines,” he added.

Blast kills at least six

FROM PAGE 1

glass from nearby buildings strewn all over the street. Bloodstains were also seen at different spots on the road. Three passenger busses hit by flying rubble were damaged and stuck on the road.

Around 10 of those hurt in the explosion had sustained burn injuries and were admitted to the Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery. At least 40 others were being treated at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital’s emergency unit, said hospital sources.

Of the injured, 15 were said to be in critical condition, the sources added.

Accumulated gas in the appliance store could have ignited and caused the explosion, said an official of a bomb disposal unit that visited the spot.

“We are analysing the nature of the explosion...,” said Rahmatullah Chowdhury of the bomb disposal unit.

Sheikh Abdul Jalil, owner of an adjacent four-storey building, said, “I heard a huge bang and then my building started shaking. It seemed to that a tremor jolted my building.

“Then I saw smoke billowing from the building. Many people were shouting for help,” he told The Daily Star. He said he went to the spot around 10 minutes later and saw at least 50 people being rushed to hospital.

Jalil, also the principal of the nearby Oriental School, said window panes of his house and school had

shattered due to the explosion.

All the glass up to five floors of a nine-storey building across the road had totally shattered.

Md Imon, a local involved in the rescue operation, said he and his friends had rescued three people, including a baby, from the building.

PROBE BODY FORMED

Fire Service DG Sazzad Hussain said they have formed a four-member probe body headed by director of operations of the fire service to investigate the incident. The committee will submit its report within seven working days, he said.

“We may be able to say clearly what actually happened here after the investigation,” said the DG.

Asked about illegal gas connections, the DG said there was a restaurant on the ground floor of the building and it has a gas connection.

“We will only able to say clearly about the legality of the gas connection after the investigation ends,” he said.

Besides, construction work was being done on the road in front of the building and there was a gas pipeline. “We will also check whether any gas leakage took place due to construction work,” the DG said.

An official of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited said a team is working on the site to check whether there were any illegal connections in the building.

“We may be able to say clearly after the end of the inspection,” said the officer, requesting anonymity.



Chittagong University student Shahidul Islam pictured with a monkey he has named Modhu. He rescued this monkey last year from Khagrachhari, when it was an infant and left behind by its group. The photo was taken from the city’s Sholoshohor Rail Station recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Swinging between lockdowns

FROM PAGE 1

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 on the streets, the circular said.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque told reporters at the Secretariat yesterday that the government is set to enforce a nationwide partial lockdown from Monday and it will turn into a complete one from Thursday.

During the complete lockdown, there will be police, BGB and army members on the streets, he said.

Both the partial lockdown and the “complete lockdown” were decisions that came in the day and took the country by surprise.

Late on Friday evening, the PID issued a press statement declaring that

the country would go into a lockdown until further notice from Monday.

This was the first time the government used formally the word “lockdown” indicating the strict nature of restrictions about to be put in place.

Soon afterwards, the PID issued another statement saying instead of going into lockdown until further notice, the country would be put under a weeklong lockdown.

The very next day, the government postponed the lockdown, and instated a three-day partial lockdown, after a high-level meeting chaired by Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal.

The cabinet secretary, principal secretary of the Prime Minister’s Office, governor of Bangladesh Bank, representatives of business associations like BGMEA, BKMEA, and other trade bodies were present at the meeting.

But even before the decision of a countrywide lockdown was made, on June 21, the government imposed

movement restrictions on seven districts surrounding Dhaka, cutting off the capital city from the rest of the country.

This was supposedly done to keep people from travelling to Dhaka, so as to avoid putting the capital city under lockdown, cabinet division sources told The Daily Star.

But three days in, the National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19 recommended “a complete shutdown” for 14 days. The lockdown was announced a day later.

As the government flip-flopped over the decisions, the general public made a mad dash to exit the city, fearing a period of unemployment. Even though the districts surrounding Dhaka were blocked off to stop people from exiting, the curbs put in place fell flat as throngs of people left the capital anyway.

Others rushed to markets and shopping malls to stock up on essentials, ignoring guidelines on not forming crowds.

Hasina seeks cooperation from all

FROM PAGE 1

from the deadly virus has also spiked.

She requested all to keep themselves protected along with their families.

The prime minister urged the people to follow the health guidelines saying, “This is my special request to you.”

Of the recipients of the award, five received gold medals, nine silver medals, and 18 bronze medals for their outstanding contribution to different fields in agriculture.

The award-giving ceremony was held at Osmani Memorial Auditorium while the prime minister joined it virtually from her official residence the Gono Bhaban.

These awards were given for their special contribution to agriculture research and expansion, cooperatives motivation, technology innovation, commercial farming, afforestation, rearing livestock and poultry, and fish farming.

Agriculture Minister and Chairman of Bangabandhu Krishi Puroshkar Trust M Abdur Razzaque handed over the awards on behalf of the prime minister.

Agriculture Minister M Abdur Razzaque And Fisheries and Livestock Minister SM Rezaul Karim spoke at the

programme.

Maya Rani Baul expressed her feeling about the programme on behalf of the awardees.

A video on the advancement of the agricultural sector was a screen in the programme.

The prime minister also unveiled the cover of several publications on the agricultural sector of the country.

Sheikh Hasina said that the government is working in six thematic areas to attain sufficiency in agriculture, food security, and nutrition.

These areas are agricultural research and development, supply of agricultural materials, agricultural expansion, maintain austerity in irrigation, facing the impact of climate change, and increase of institutional capacity and human resource development.

She also emphasise increasing agricultural production complying with the international standard for boosting the export basket to earn more foreign exchange.

In this connection, she said that food processing and agricultural product processing industries would play an important role.

“In the 100 economic zones we are

trying to establish food processing and agricultural product processing industries so that the country could enhance the number of export items,” she said.

She asked the authorities concerned to work keeping that in their mind.

Sheikh Hasina also said that the government has taken initiatives to comply with the rules and regulations needed for exporting food and agricultural items.

In this regard, she said that the government has established a fito-sanitary in Shyampur which is playing important role in maintaining standards for export-bound agricultural items also.

She said that agriculture is contributing most to making the country economically self-dependent.

Saying that the country has attained the developing country status, Sheikh Hasina asked all to take forward this achievement in the coming days.

The prime minister unveiled covers of a publication comprising one hundred sayings of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman titled “Bani Chirosobuj” published by the agriculture ministry and a memorial book “Chironjib” at the function.

Momen doubts it’ll be smooth

FROM PAGE 1

“In addition, we demand that Covid vaccines be a public good and its technology should be shared and available to all countries to produce it at affordable prices.”

He made the remarks at a time when Bangladesh is struggling to get vaccines since India halted export of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines in February after Serum Institute of India supplied only seven million of the 30 million contracted by Bangladesh.

The country then initiated imports from China and Russia, and also made requests to the UK, US, Canada and Australia in this regard. China gifted 11 lakh doses of Sinopharm vaccines, while the US provided one lakh 600 Pfizer doses so far under the Covax initiative.

Last week, Momen said the countries were hoarding vaccines and attaching conditions.

At the webinar, he said this pandemic showed how political leaders, scientists, and citizens cannot operate in isolation during health crises. Health emergencies must be viewed as global security crises that require coordination and cooperation among all stakeholders.

He called for stronger regional and international cooperation in order to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and to help during the rebuilding phase.

The number of traditional wars

between states is falling, while insurgencies, civil war and sectarian rifts are on the rise in the global and South Asian security landscape.

South Asia, as a region, needs to decipher the challenges and opportunities that might emerge from these new systemic shifts for a better future, he observed.

Touching upon the Rohingya issue, Momen said what was once an internal matter for Myanmar has now destabilised the regional tranquillity of South and Southeast Asia, triggering a global outcry.

In the backdrop of the recent political turmoil in Myanmar, the international community must realise that the country has a long history of persecuting its own people, especially the Rohingyas, under the pretext of security operations.

“It is better if regional leaders

understand early on that statelessness

of a large ethnic group, in the face

of persecution, might open up a

‘volcano’, if not treated with promise

and action to serve justice.”

Lt Gen M Harun Ar Rashid (retd)

said conflicts between major powers

in South Asia pose a major challenge

for the region. With all its existing

internal problems, it will witness a

graver scenario if regional integration

is not strengthened.

The densely-populated region

is already witnessing millions of

people being pushed into poverty,

while there are challenges of religious fundamentalism, terrorism and environmental degradation, he said.

Ambassador Fazlul Karim, chairman of BIISS, said regional cooperation in South Asia should be strengthened to thwart any interventions by the super powers.

He also said a major challenge for Bangladesh is to sustain growth and recover the economies, while calling for global cooperation.

Professors Intiaz Ahmed and Rashed Uz Zaman of international relations at Dhaka University; BIISS DTG Major Emdadul Bari, Research Fellow M Ashique Rahman and Additional Inspector General of Special Branch Monirul Islam, among others, spoke at the virtual event.

Country logs

FROM PAGE 1

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 lockdown from July 1.

On Friday evening, Press Information Department (PID) issues a statement stating that the country will be put under a complete lockdown for seven days.

5-yr-old murdered after rape

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

A five-year-old child was found murdered after being raped in her home in the port city’s Chandgaon area yesterday.

Police recovered her body from under a bed at noon.

The incident took place at a residential building of Sankar Dwanji Hat area of Chandgaon, said police, adding the victim resided with her parents on the third floor of the building.

Rajesh Barua, inspector (Investigation) of Chandgaon Police Station, said, “The victim’s mother is a worker at Suji Garments Ltd in Chandgaon. She left the house for work around 7:30am.”

“A woman from a neighbouring flat, who had children of her own, used to look after the girl while her mother would be at work. On Sunday morning, the woman found the child sleeping around 7:30am, after the mother left.

“She then left the door ajar, went back to her own flat and fell asleep. Around 9:00am, she woke up and asked her children to see if the child was awake. They told her she had gone missing.”

The woman then went searching for the girl but found nothing and informed the child’s mother and other neighbours.

Upon searching the flat again, they found the girl’s body under the bed with a T-shirt covering her face.

“The body bore several injury marks and signs of rape. Police sent the body to Chattogram Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy,” said the police officer.

Police were trying to gather more information to identify the killer, he added.

Govt officially 10 coal power plant projects

UNB, Dhaka

State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid said the government has dropped 10 coal-fired power plant projects, with total generation capacity of 8451 MW, as it seeks to revise the country’s power system master plan (PSMP).

The proposed plants are Patuakhai (660X2) 1320 MW, Uttarbanga 1200 MW thermal plant, Mawa 522 MM, Dhaka 282 MW, Chattagram 282 MW, Khulna 565 MW, Maheshkhali 1320 MW, another Maheshkhali 1320 MW, Bangladesh-Singapore 700 MW, and CPGCBL-Sumitomo 1200 MW power plant.

“We have decided to annul these projects as part of the adaptation of new technologies in power generation as the coal-fired plants failed to come into generation within their stipulated timeframe,” he said placing the list of the scrapped projects at a press conference at his ministry on Sunday.

Officials said all the scrapped projects were awarded to private sector sponsors to set up as independent power producers (IPP) from which the government was supposed to purchase electricity under a long-term contract of 20 years.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

HC questions words used in divorce notices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday questioned the use of certain offensive words in a Talaq (divorce) notice.

It issued a rule asking respondents to show causes in four weeks as to why the customary practice, followed by the Nikah registrar, and the use of such words in the existing and customised Talaq notice could not be declared illegal.

Secretary at the law and justice division of the law ministry and inspector general of registration have been made respondents to the rule.

The HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman issued the rule following a writ petition filed by a woman challenging the legality of the use of offensive words in a divorce notice she received from her husband in 2017.

The petitioner’s lawyer Abdullah Al Noman told The Daily Star that his client, who is an academican working in the Odette School of Business, University of Windsor of Ontario, Canada, received a divorce notice from her husband containing irrational, derogatory, and objectionable terms in 2017.

In the divorce notice, the husband used the column in the format of

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6