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CONTAINING COVID

Alarmed, govt revs up response

PMO instructs DCs to take urgent steps to ensure beds, oxygen supply at public hospitals

Govt to engage private hospitals, clinics for treating growing number of Covid patients

District officials asked to enhance community engagement and encourage people to take vaccines

Plan to import medical oxygen from India by trains to meet increasing demand at hospitals

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

With Covid deaths and infections surging, the Prime Minister's Office has directed the divisional and deputy commissioners to take steps to raise the number of beds and ensure oxygen supply at public hospitals treating coronavirus patients.

It has also given instructions for engaging private hospitals across the country in treating the growing number of patients infected with the virus.

The directives came at an urgent virtual meeting between the PMO officials and the divisional and deputy commissioners yesterday.

The PMO officials said the government plans to import medical oxygen from India by trains to meet the ever-increasing demand for the life-saving gas, said meeting sources.

PM's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus, who chaired the meeting, asked the local administrations to ensure that those having Covid symptoms are kept in isolation, the sources mentioned.

"The meeting discussed issues including installation of additional beds for Covid patients at public hospitals," said SM Tarikul Islam, deputy commissioner of Gazipur.

"We have been asked to constantly monitor the oxygen supply situation and contact the authorities concerned before supply shortage," he told this newspaper after attending the meeting.

The development comes at a time when most of the district hospitals are grappling with the rising number of Covid patients.

There has been a surge in both infections and deaths over the last few days though a

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People wait at a playground in the capital's Siddheswari area to receive help amid the ongoing lockdown to curb Covid-19 transmission. Bangladesh Dokan Malik Samity, an association of shop owners, distributed free food and cash among more than 300 poor people on the ground yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



CLIMATE RECOVERY Hasina seeks support from rich nations

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday placed a five-point proposal, including on the green recovery of climate vulnerable countries with support from the developed nations, as the climate change has brought them to a threshold.

"Developed nations should facilitate the green recovery of the CVF-V20 countries. Dedicated support is required for reducing the cost of capital and encouraging private sector participation," she said while placing her proposals in the first V20

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Turning grimmer every day

199 deaths, record 11,651 cases in a single day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rising coronavirus infections are making the situation worse every single day with the DGHS releasing grimmer and grimmer data.

It reported the highest, 11,651, new cases in a day and the second-worst daily deaths tally, 199 people, yesterday.

The positivity rate was 31.62 percent yesterday, the second-highest since August 31 last year when it was 31.91 percent.

The total cases reported so far is 9,89,219 and total confirmed deaths caused by the pathogen is 15,792.

At least 1.60 percent of the people infected have died, according to the data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With surging numbers of Covid-19 cases every day, the hospitals, especially those in Khulna, Rajshahi, Rangpur, and Chattogram divisions, have been struggling to treat patients.

As of yesterday noon, there were at least 13 hospitals across the country treating more patients than their capacity.

At least 61 percent of all the general beds, 14,972, dedicated to Covid patients across the country were occupied yesterday but more worrying was the fact that 73 percent of all ICU beds, 1,251, had Covid patients.

Hospitals in Dhaka said they were getting an increasing number of Covid patients every day.

"Around 70 percent of the patients here are from the districts outside Dhaka. Almost all of them require critical care, including ICU support. We have been able to provide

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Black money finds legal home

Govt officials, lawyers, engineers, realtors, doctors, among others, whiten undisclosed assets

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON and AHSAN HABIB

Government officials, lawyers, engineers, owners of construction companies, private clinics and doctors mostly whiten their undisclosed wealth last fiscal year.

Some 479 taxpayers of Dhaka Tax Zone-4 washed undisclosed assets worth Tk 1,680 crore in the fiscal year that ended on June 30 by paying a 10 percent tax. The majority of the taxpayers in this zone are government officials.

After Dhaka, most of the undisclosed funds were whiten in Chattogram, Khulna, Bogura, Narayanganj and Rajshahi.

A total of 11,859 taxpayers legalised their black money last fiscal year by paying Tk 2,064 crore in tax.

Save for land and flat valuation, about Tk 17,230 crore has been whiten in fiscal 2020-21, according to the data from the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

As the tax value is different for land and flat in different places, the tax received on the whiten amount could not be determined.

Some 4,514 land and flat owners whiten their assets by paying a tax of Tk 343 crore.

People preferred to keep their funds in hand or banks mostly. Hardly any of



the amount whiten was headed to the stock market.

Some 7,055 taxpayers invested their undisclosed money by keeping funds in hand, bank and savings certificates after paying a combined tax of Tk 1,683 crore during the year.

The details provided by the NBR explode certain myths on sectors that benefit from the undisclosed money whitening facility, said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World

Bank's Dhaka office.

The common perception is that the share market and the real estate sectors benefit the most, he said, adding that data shows the share market only accounted for 1.9 percent and the real estate sector 16.6 percent of the total money whiten.

The remaining 81.5 percent went into bank deposits and national savings certificates, he said.

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ASHRAYAN-2 PROJECT 12 families paid UP chairman to get houses

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Homeless beneficiaries of a government housing project in Faridpur Sadar upazila said they had to pay the local union parishad chairman money to get their houses built.

Besides, they alleged that irregularities took place in the construction of the houses in Paldangi area.

The beneficiaries said Mehdi Hasan, chairman of Dikrirchar Union Parishad, took Tk 25,000 for each house from 12 families.

According to the UNO office in Faridpur Sadar upazila, 153 houses for homeless and landless families were constructed in the upazila under the second phase of the Ashrayan-2 Project.

Of the houses, 12 were built on 24 decimals of land at Paldangi in Dikrirchar union in this phase.

The houses were handed over on June 20 on the

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N'GANJ FACTORY FIRE 3 die jumping off roof of six-storey building

10 others injured



OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Three people died after jumping off the roof of a six-storey building on fire in Narayanganj's Ruppang yesterday evening.

All the deceased were workers of a food processing factory on the ground floor of the building.

Ten other workers were injured trying to rush out of the factory, reports our Narayanganj correspondent quoting Shah Alam, sub-officer of Ruppang Fire Service and Civil Defence.

The deceased were: Shopna Rani, 45, wife of Jati Sarkar from Sylhet, Mina Akhter, 33, wife of Harun Mistry of Ruppang upazila, and Mursalin, 24.

Seven of the injured workers were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, the

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Mahmudullah Riyad and Taskin Ahmed put a 191-run stand for the ninth wicket in the first Test against Zimbabwe, the second-highest stand for that wicket in the history of Test cricket. Mahmudullah, coming in at number eight, was unbeaten for 150 while Taskin departed after scoring 75.

PHOTO: ZIMBABWE CRICKET

LOCKDOWN DETAINEES Crammed in vans, at risk of catching Covid

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI and SHARIFUL ISLAM

People arrested for defying the ongoing lockdown are being taken to courts in packed prison vans, raising their chances of contracting Covid-19 and spreading it to their families.

Around 1,000 arrestees, many seen without face masks, were taken to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka in prison vans on Wednesday and yesterday.

The lockdown began in the capital from July 1 to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus.

A police officer on duty at the court said prison vans carried a minimum of 10 to a maximum of 30 arrestees.

Abdul Latif, officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station, claimed that before boarding the prison vans, arrestees are provided with face masks. He also said that when the number of arrestees is high, they arrange more vans.

Several hundred family members and friends of the arrestees have also been gathering at the court compound every day. Many of them were also found either without masks or wearing it improperly, this correspondent witnessed when visiting the court premises yesterday.

The situation was the same on Wednesday. Court sources said that until yesterday, over 4,500 people were arrested in connection with violating lockdown rules and taken to the CMM court in Dhaka.

Most of them were fined Tk 100 as punishment and released, court officials said.

Many of the arrestees are from lower socio-economic backgrounds and had stepped out of home for work, relatives of those arrested over the last two days told The Daily Star.

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