



**'GRIEVOUS MISTAKE'**  
Says Blinken as Cuba blames US for unprecedented anti-govt protests  
**SEE PAGE 6**

# The Daily Star

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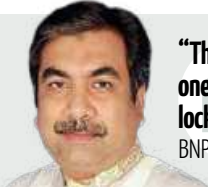
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**"The government has completely failed in vaccination diplomacy."**  
JP CHAIRMAN AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION GM QUADER



**"The government has been making wrong decisions one after another ... This decision [easing, lockdown] will only worsen the situation."**  
BNP ORGANISING SECRETARY SYED EMRAN SALEH PRINCE



**"The Delta variant is ripping around the world at a scorching pace, driving a new spike in Covid-19 cases and death."**  
WHO CHIEF TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS

GOVT'S NEW STIMULUS PACKAGES

## For the poor made poorer

Questions hang over targeting of poor; experts voice concern about the new poor

- **Tk 450 crore** allocated for providing cash aid to 17.24 lakh day-laborers, transport workers, small traders and shipping workers
- **Tk 1,500 crore** for Palli Sanchay Bank, Karmasangsthan Bank and PKSF for financing job creation activities in rural areas
- **Tk 1,000 crore** allocated for providing loans at 4% interest for paying salaries, allowances of the employees of hotels, motels and theme parks
- **Tk 100 crore** to be given to Deputy Commissioners for providing food assistance to the poor on request

REJAUH KARIM BYRON and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government yesterday announced a Tk 3,200 crore relief package for the ultra-poor and destitute families and the tourism sector -- segments that were dealt a fresh blow by the latest round of hard lockdown to contain the second wave of Covid-19 cases.

The country would be entering into another two weeks of strict lockdown from

July 23, so the latest package would provide some relief to the poor, who were hit the hardest by the global coronavirus pandemic that began in earnest in Bangladesh from March last year.

As many as 9 crore are now in a vulnerable position, according to the Asian Development Bank.

Under the new package, which comes as the country wraps up two weeks of 'hard'

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Three-year-old Rakib, Right, and his elder brother Rifat selling masks in front of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday. As their father, a cook, hardly has any work and the boys' school is closed due to the pandemic, they have been sent on the job to support their family. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Daily deaths still hover above 200

Covid infections in 5 digits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Officials reported 203 deaths from Covid-19 in 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday, taking the official death toll from coronavirus to 16,842.

The death rate stood at 1.61 percent, said a press release issued by the Directorate General of Health Services.

At least 12,198 new infections were recorded during the period, taking the total number of confirmed cases to 10,47,155.

The positivity rate yesterday was 29.21 percent while the overall positivity rate stood at 14.84 percent.

The new cases were detected after conducting 41,755 tests across the country.

At least 7,646 Covid-19 patients have recovered during the period. The total number of recoveries was 8,56,346 with an 84.91 percent recovery rate.

Among the 203 deceased, 132 were men and 71 women. Of them, six were aged between 21 and 30, 12 between 31 and 40, 28 between 41 and 50, 39 between 51 and 60, and 118 above 60, added the release.

The country has been witnessing a surge in new cases due to the spread of the Delta variant of coronavirus.

The variant brought healthcare system in India to knees and alarmed health experts across the world.

COVID-19 SURGE

## As if Eid will give it a break

Govt announces 8-day pause in lockdown; stricter curbs for 14 days from July 23

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Relaxing the ongoing restrictions for eight days from tomorrow for the Eid-ul-Azha, the government yesterday decided to enforce a stricter lockdown across the country for two weeks from July 23 to rein in Covid infections.

The decision came at a time when the country logged 12,198 daily Covid cases and 203 deaths. A total of 1.34 lakh people got infected with the virus and 2,339 died in only 13 days from July 1.

The nationwide lockdown, imposed on July 1 to curb the surge in virus cases and deaths, ends today.

Health experts had earlier suggested continuing the lockdown, instead of relaxing it, to prevent further deterioration in the Covid situation.

They feared that the situation might turn grave in the coming week due to relaxation of restrictions with the healthcare system already under severe stress amid a surge in patients all over the country.

Yesterday, the Cabinet Division issued a gazette notification relaxing the restrictions for the Eid-ul-Azha to be celebrated on July 21. It also issued a set of directives on the stricter lockdown to be imposed on July 23.

"For the Eid-ul-Azha celebrations, all the restrictions have been relaxed from July 14 midnight till 6:00am on July 23, allowing public movement

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

### POST-EID LOCKDOWN

- Wearing masks mandatory
- Vehicular movement restricted after Eid
- Industries, factories to remain closed
- Kitchen markets will be open between 9:00am and 3:00pm

## Govt to open schools after inoculation

Says health minister a day after Unicef, Unesco warning

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The government is considering reopening schools and colleges by inoculating the teachers and students within the shortest possible time.

"The prime minister wants to reopen the educational institutions soon... Our technical committee on Covid-19 and the vaccination committee are working on it," Health Minister Zahid Maleque told The Daily Star yesterday.

Unicef and Unesco on Sunday urged decision-makers and governments all over the world to prioritise the safe reopening of schools in order to avoid a "generational catastrophe".

Education of millions of children has been disrupted since the Covid-19 outbreak started. As of yesterday, schools

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

## To us, Kishwar has already won



KARIM WAHEED

Kishwar Chowdhury, the Aussie home cook of Bangladeshi origin, didn't win the MasterChef Australia title. She placed third. But for us, Bangladeshis who have been closely following her rise and rise on arguably the most popular reality show on food, Kishwar has already won.

At the risk of making a hyperbole, it can be said that up until now, no one had the courage to put everyday Bangladeshi home-cooked food in a pride of place on a global stage. Food that we eat every day at home unceremoniously. Food we don't consider "special" enough to serve to guests, let alone to foreigners.

For us, Kishwar has won because she has shown the world that Bangladeshi food isn't another subcategory under Indian food. She strongly believes in the integrity of our unpretentious food where the ingredients are few, the bold flavours speak for themselves, and the cook cannot hide behind razzle dazzle.

When this season of MasterChef started and Kishwar was introduced, viewers in Bangladesh were naturally delighted. When she said she had a

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BUSINESS

## Rice prices rise despite bumper production

Despite the bumper yields in the just concluded Boro season, rice prices are going up, increasing the hardship of low-income people many of whom are suffering from income losses for lockdown and sluggish economic activities.

The spike raises questions among the consumers as the government agencies earlier claimed about increased production of the staple grain in the last three crop seasons. Estimates by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and Department of Agricultural Extension showed that Bangladesh produced 6 per cent higher rice year-on-year to 3.86 crore tonnes in the fiscal year 2020-21 from 3.66 crore tonnes in the previous year.

STORY ON B1

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