

48 dengue cases reported in 24hrs

UNB, Dhaka

Amid a rise in the number of dengue patients, authorities reported 48 more new cases in 24 hours until yesterday morning.

Some 236 patients diagnosed with dengue are receiving treatment at different government and private hospitals in the country as of yesterday morning, according to Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Of them, one patient is receiving treatment at a hospital outside Dhaka. Some 844 patients have been admitted to different hospitals with dengue since January, and 608 of them have been released after recovery.

The recent spike in dengue cases has added to the worries, as the country continues to grapple with the devastating second wave of the pandemic.

DGHS reported 1,193 dengue cases and three confirmed dengue-related deaths in 2020. According to official figures, 1,01,354 dengue cases and 179 deaths were recorded in Bangladesh in 2019.

Dengue fever was first reported in Bangladesh in 2000, when it claimed 93 lives. In the following three years, the fatalities almost fell to zero.

However, the mosquito-borne viral infection struck again in 2018, killing 26, and infecting 10,148 people.

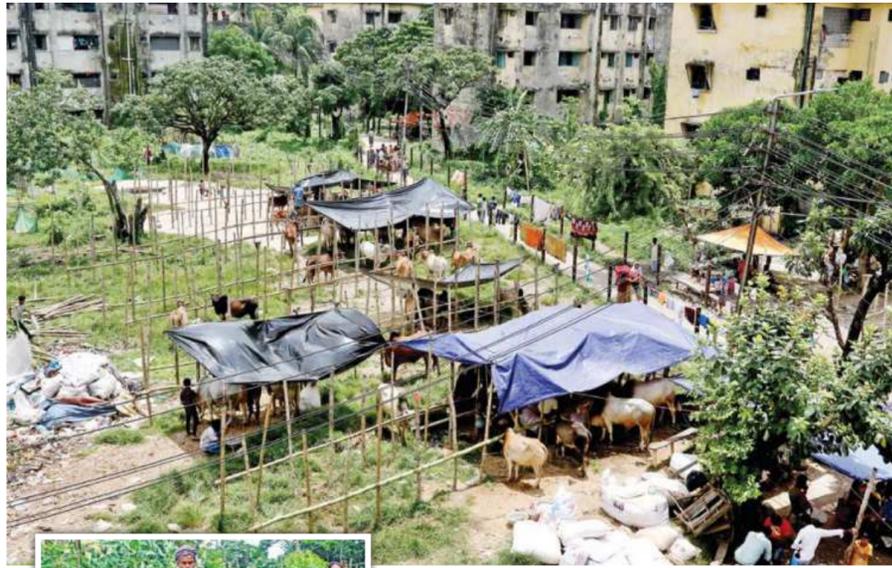


PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, RASHED SHUMON



The directions for setting up cattle markets at designated locations has not quite worked it seems, as markets have sprung up here and there across the capital. Markets in the city are scheduled to operate from July 17-21, but this one here at the capital's Shahjahanpur Railway Colony has already started business. Judging by children's jubilation around a cow, inset, health safety guidelines are not much of a priority.

Safety takes a back seat at cattle markets

Set to open Saturday, they're already teeming with traders, buyers; health guidelines largely ignored

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Even though the cattle markets in the capital were scheduled to start from Saturday, they are already witnessing large crowds as not only traders are bringing in sacrificial animals, people are also thronging there to purchase those, even amid the lockdown.

This is also increasing the risk of further spread of coronavirus as both buyers and traders were seen not maintaining health guidelines at the markets.

Traders have already started to bring in their cattle since Friday.

During visits to markets including Dhupkhola playground, North Shahjahanpur, Kachukhet and Gabtali, it was seen that most traders as well as visitors did not have masks on.

Besides, the market authorities did not set up any hand washing facility and thermal scanner to check body temperature. There was also no hand sanitiser available as part of the health guidelines.

This year, the two Dhaka city corporations are setting up 20 cattle markets -- 10 in Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and 10 in Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), including the permanent one at Gabtali.

Mohammad Polas Ali, a trader who brought 19 bulls from Jhenaidah on Friday at Dhupkhola, said they came early to get a good place at the market. He and his associates were not wearing masks.

Asked about health guidelines, he said they were asked to wear masks and wash hands regularly but they cannot do so all the time due to their work.

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A second chance at life

Man's death sentence commuted by SC after years in condemned cell, after lawyer steps up for him pro bono

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Swapon Kumar Biswas, a private service holder, hit his wife Swapna Ghosh's head at a stage of altercation, resulting in her death 15 years back.

Swapon, who was 28 years old at that time, was sentenced to death by a trial court two years later, in 2008.

Being in a condemned cell for over a decade, he wrote a letter to senior counsel and criminal law expert Khandker Mahbub Hossain through jail authorities on July 30, 2019, requesting for pro bono legal assistance.

Mahbub Hossain received the letter on November 30, 2019 and decided to provide legal assistance to him without any cost.

He convinced the Appellate Division through legal arguments last week that Swapon had no intention to kill his wife.

The apex court on Monday commuted Swapon's death penalty to life imprisonment, clearing the way for him to

walk out of jail after six and a half years.

He said the incident took place in the heat of the moment.

Therefore, the sentence should be 10 years' imprisonment under section 304 of the Penal Code.

On Monday, the SC in its verdict said Swapon will get the benefit of section 35(A) of the CrPC in calculation of his sentence.

The apex court thanked Mahbub Hossain for giving pro bono legal assistance to an insolvent justice seeker. The bench led by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain said their expression of thanks will be mentioned in the written judgement.

After the SC delivered the verdict, Mahbub told The Daily Star that Swapon has become destitute facing the case's trial proceedings.

"I accepted the request on humanitarian grounds and placed arguments on behalf of Swapon free of charge. After five or six

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CONFERENCE IN TASHKENT

Momen to hold talks with Indian Chinese, Russian counterparts

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen will hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts from India, China and Russia in the Uzbek capital of Tashkent, where he is expected to seek cooperation for speedy vaccine supply and solving the Rohingya crisis.

"For us, vaccine supply and Rohingya repatriation are our high priorities. All these countries are very important players in this regard," said a foreign ministry official yesterday.

Momen leaves for Uzbekistan this morning to attend the two-day conference on Central and South Asian Connectivity Challenges and Opportunities to be hosted by Uzbek government.

Delegates from 57 countries, including state or government heads from at least three countries, will be attending the event on July 15-16.

Uzbekistan is seeking to improve connectivity in the Central Asian as well as with South Asian countries. Bangladesh, which is becoming a connectivity hub in South and Southeast Asia, also wants to connect to the Central Asia.

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Dhaka traffic almost back to its old self

STAR REPORT

It was an all too familiar Dhaka yesterday, with thoroughfares witnessing rapid rise in vehicular and public movement as well as traffic congestion -- on the 13th day of the government's "strict lockdown".

Though the government circular to ease the lockdown will come into effect from tomorrow, large numbers of people and vehicles like private cars, motorbikes and rickshaws were seen on streets.

There were gridlocks at different intersections including Panthapath, Karan Bazar, Bijoy Sarani, Mouchak, Kakrail and Mohakhali areas. Private cars, motorbikes and rickshaws dominated the city thoroughfares, while large numbers of people were seen walking.

"I have heard that the government has withdrawn the lockdown. That's why I have come out of home and going to a relative's residence," said Imran Hossain, a resident of Kalabagan, on his way to Moghbazar.

Around noon, a pedestrian, Abul Kashem was seen walking in Shabbagh area. Asked, he said, "I've been at home for over 10 days in a row. So I decided to head out."

Besides, many were seen roaming around without wearing masks.

"I know wearing mask is important. But I cannot keep wearing it all the time as I feel suffocated," said Shamvu Debnath.

The youth was buying mango from a vendor at Kathalbagan.

Like other days, kitchen markets also drew public gatherings, and vendors were seen roaming around the streets while many shops stayed open.

This newspaper also saw some hardware stores open in Green Road area. A tea-stall vendor was seen operating his business in full-swing at Mohammadpur's Zakir Hossain road around 3pm.

Even the law enforcers seemed a bit relaxed yesterday.

"You see, there are huge rush of vehicles today. How can we check hundreds of vehicles?" said a traffic police at Panthapath intersection.

Meanwhile, DMP's mobile courts fined 119 persons over Tk 2.14 lakh and 696 vehicles over Tk 14.38 lakh for violating lockdown. Some 552 people were arrested on similar charges.

Outside Dhaka, gridlock was created on Dhaka-Chattogram and Dhaka-Sylhet highways due to repairing works on Langalbandh Bridge in Narayanganj.

The government imposed a seven-day nationwide "strict lockdown" from July 1. Later, it was extended till July 14.

But the government on Monday issued a circular relaxing the lockdown from July 15 to early morning (6am) of July 23. It will be re-imposed from July 23 to August 5.

3 held with crystal meth in port city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rab claimed to have arrested three drug dealers along with 975 grammes of crystal meth from Chattogram's Patharghata area on Monday night.

The arrestee are Shahidul Islam Tipu (28), Kazi Aminur Rashid (48) and Saimon Tarek (49).

On information, a team of Rab-7 arrested them from Notun Fishery Ghat area and seized the drugs from their possession, Lt Commander Moshir Rahman, commanding officer of Rab-7, told a press briefing at his office yesterday.

"The drugs (worth Tk 1 crore) were smuggled into Teknaf from Myanmar seven to eight months

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Easing lockdown a wrong move: BNP

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday termed the government's decision to relax the lockdown for a week ahead of Eid-ul-Azha a wrong one, and warned that it will contribute to further deterioration of the Covid situation.

"The government has been making wrong decisions one after another to hide its failures. This decision (to ease lockdown) will only worsen the situation further," said BNP organising secretary Syed Emran Saleh Prince, while talking to reporters after distributing food among people in front of BNP's Nayaplattan central office and its adjacent areas.

He also said had the government enforced a strict lockdown by providing low-income people with food and cash support after Eid-ul-Fitr and brought vaccines for all, the lockdown would not be needed.

Prince alleged that people are falling into catastrophic situations repeatedly due to the failures of the government and its wrong decisions. He alleged that most steps taken by the government to tackle the coronavirus pandemic were against people.

"They've completely failed to deal with the situation." The BNP leader said their party has repeatedly been saying that lockdowns or curfews will not work unless the needy and low-income people and those who live from hand-to-mouth are given necessary money and food support. "Now that has been proved right."

He demanded the government give one-time assistance of Tk 15,000 to marginalised people.

Prince said Jatiyatabadi Nagorik Samaj, a platform of BNP, arranged the food distribution programme as many people are going through serious sufferings due to the ongoing lockdown enforced by the government in an unplanned way.

'Govt failed in its vaccine diplomacy'

Says GM Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party chairman and deputy leader of the opposition in parliament GM Quader yesterday said the government has completely failed in its vaccine diplomacy.

"While all the countries have normalised the situation with their mass vaccination programmes, we have not yet got full confirmation about getting the required Covid vaccines," he said in a views-exchange at his office in the city's Banani.

GM Quader said it would not be possible to deal with the pandemic just by wearing masks and washing hands. The government has to ensure vaccination for all.

The Covid situation has taken a terrible turn. According to experts, it may worsen in the future, he said, alleging that it happened as the government has failed to provide people with vaccines in proper time.

In this context, he said, lockdown will never be successful because most

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Hundreds of vehicles, mostly goods-laden ones, are stuck in a 25km traffic congestion in Narayanganj on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway. The situation was created due to repair work on the Langalbandh bridge.

PHOTO: UNB

Deans' body recommends rescheduling DU entry test

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) deans' committee has recommended rescheduling its honours admission tests for 2020-21 session, as the Covid-19 situation has worsened.

The committee, in a virtual meeting with DU Vice-Chancellor Prof Akhtaruzzaman in the chair, made the recommendation, DU Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Professor Dr ASM Maksud Kamal told The Daily Star.

It recommended taking science faculty (Ka unit) exam on October 1 instead of August 6, arts faculty (Kha unit) on October 2, fine arts (general part) faculty on October 9, business studies faculty (Ga unit) on October 22, while exam for social science faculty (Gha unit) was recommended for October 23.

Earlier on April 29, the university authorities were forced to reschedule dates of tests due to deteriorating situation of the pandemic.

The committee also recommended deferring admission tests of seven DU-affiliated colleges.



After a rather extended hiatus due to a shortage in supply, Covid-19 vaccination campaign resumed yesterday in Chattogram as registrants queued up to receive Moderna jabs since morning at their designated centres. The photo was taken from Chattogram General Hospital.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

AMI PROBASHI APP REGISTRATION

Protect data of migrant workers: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Civil Society for Migrants yesterday urged the government to protect data provided by migrant workers when registering for "Ami Probashi" app, which is a prerequisite for Covid-19 vaccine registration.

Saying some private organisations are involved in operating Ami Probashi, they urged the government to add a "disclaimer" in the app's registration form, saying that data from the app will not be used for other purposes except for government use to send workers abroad.

A platform of more than 20 likeminded organisations working in the migration sector, BCSM made the call during an online press conference. Besides, the platform urged the government to arrange single-dose vaccines such as Johnson and Johnson, which are approved in the destination country, for migrant workers to save their time during vaccination.

As per a government decision, outbound migrant workers have to register on Ami Probashi under the expatriates' welfare ministry first to have access to the designated Surokkha app for vaccine registration.

On Ami Probashi, a migrant worker has to input data of themselves and their families, said Prof Tasneem Siddiqui, chairperson of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), a member organisation of BCSM.

However, there is no disclaimer in the form stating that data will not be used for any other purpose by other institutions or organisations, she said, while reading out a concept note.

"It is a question of ethical concern," said Prof Tasneem.

Alongside the government, some private organisations are involved in the operation of Ami Probashi app, she added.

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