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"Passengers must be carried maintaining rules and health safety guidelines, otherwise legal action would be taken."
ROAD TRANSPORT AND BRIDGES MINISTER OBIDUL QUADER WARNS TRANSPORT OWNERS



"The 14-day lockdown that will begin right after Eid, will be stricter than the last strict lockdown."
STATE MINISTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FARHAD HOSSAIN



"Look, the only pandemic we have is among the unvaccinated. And they're killing people."
US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN SLAMS SOCIAL MEDIA FOR FAILING TO STOP COVID MISINFORMATION

Foolhardy for festivities

People stream out of city amid risk of Covid, suffer all along

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People in their thousands continued to leave the capital yesterday for Eid-ul-Azha celebration and those heading to the northern, north-western and southern districts suffered immensely on highways and near ferry terminals due to congestion.

Once again, physical distancing was largely ignored during the mad rush. Many did not wear masks properly. It fuelled concerns of a rise in the Covid-19 transmission at a time when both virus deaths and infections are surging across the country.

The situation was almost similar on Friday.

Meanwhile, transport operators and officials involved in the sector said the number of home-goers is likely to increase today and so is their suffering. They also said the home rush is expected to reach its peak on Tuesday with the beginning of the government holidays for the festival.

According to different estimations, more than one crore people left Dhaka, Narayanganj and Gazipur district ahead of Eid every year before the pandemic. Many office-goers in these districts would send

their family members home days before the festival and they would join them later.

But this time, the home-goers have to leave the districts within a short period of time since a 14-day countrywide coronavirus lockdown ended only on Wednesday. Their sufferings have been aggravated after the government asked transport operators to keep half the seats vacant to ensure physical distancing. Many operators are charging passengers extra. At the same time, they are carrying more passengers than they are supposed to.

The government relaxed the strict lockdown for eight days from Thursday for the Eid, which will be celebrated on Wednesday.

It made the move ignoring health experts who warned of a spike in virus infections and deaths.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, a platform working to protect passengers' rights, yesterday urged the government to take action against unscrupulous bus operators who were overcharging passengers and not maintaining the health safety rules.

Most public transport operators are not

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A bull being unloaded from a cargo vessel at Shashan Ghat in the capital's Postagola yesterday. Traders and farmers from Kushtia have brought sacrificial animals on this boat to sell those in a temporary cattle market at Shashan Ghat. With the Eid-ul-Azha only two days away, sale of animals is gathering pace.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Weekly Covid deaths, cases increase

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fatalities and new cases of Covid-19 have both shot up this week, coincidentally, with the lifting of lockdown on July 15 despite health experts' best advice.

In the 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, Bangladesh recorded 204 Covid-19 deaths and 8,489 infections, according to the data from the Directorate General of Health Services.

Until yesterday, the fatalities have increased 15.9 percent and infections 13.7 percent from a week earlier.

In the past week, a total of 1,277 died from Covid-19 and 73,059 had tested positive.

The week has not ended yet and the numbers have already been exceeded: as of yesterday morning, there have been 1,480 deaths and 83,096 infections.

On the bright side, the rate of recovery of Covid-19 patients has also increased: by 41.30 percent.

Last week, a total of 38,940 people recovered from the disease. So far this

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Covid fear loses way in cattle markets

SHAHEEN MOLLA, HELEMUL ALAM and MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The government's condition of maintaining health guidelines for allowing cattle markets ahead of Eid-ul-Azha seems to have fallen on deaf ears.

The measures instructed by the government at the cattle markets include checking of body temperature at the entrance, which would have disinfected chambers and proper handwashing stations as well.

The cattle markets must provide separate entry and exit points to enable one-way movement of buyers throughout the venue and avoid crowding at the venue, as per a notice from the Press Information Department (PID) on Tuesday.

The correspondents visited makeshift cattle markets at Gabtoli, Kochukhet, Dhupkhola, Sadeque Hossain Khoka Playground, Postagola and Mohammadpur and found none of the instructions was being followed.

Neither were there separate walkways nor were there handwashing facilities at the entrance. The body temperature was not being checked either.

The entry of the elderly and children are supposed to be restricted inside the venue as they are more vulnerable to Covid-19. But buyers, old and new, were seen casually moving about.

What is most frightening was that only a handful of people were seen wearing masks at these markets -- at a time when the coronavirus caseload and fatalities are spiralling.

PHOTOS ON PAGE 5

Shamsul Alam to be sworn into cabinet today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Repeated increase in the costs of different government projects, in line with the extension of the projects' implementation, has become a common practice nowadays.

Recently, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called upon different ministers and government officials for multiple times to reduce the waste of public money in these projects.

To minimise the waste and reduce the time for projects' implementation, the premier is going to appoint Prof Shamsul Alam as the state minister

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Tragedy scripted with own lives

Cinema hall staff, families reeling from the pandemic with no support from industry, govt

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

For Atoar Rahman, life has played out like a tragic movie since the Covid-19 pandemic brought the country's already-struggling film industry to a grinding halt more than a year ago.

A projector operator at Ananda Cinema Hall at Farmgate, he has not been getting any wages for more than a year and a half. Yet, he clings on to the industry that has been his life and livelihood for over three decades.

With cinemas shut, the 50-year-old had no option but to start working as a labourer to make ends meet.

However, renewed shutdowns and the recent lockdown

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Court slaps travel ban on Evaly MD, chairman

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court on Thursday issued a travel ban on evaly.com.bd Chairman Shamima Nasrin and Managing Director Mohammad Russel as part of an investigation into the allegation that they embezzled around Tk 338.62 crore.

KM Emrul Kayesh of Dhaka's Senior Special Judge's Court passed the order after Mamunur Rashid Chowdhury, an assistant director of the Anti-Corruption Commission, also the head of the enquiry team, submitted an application to the court, seeking the travel ban.

The judge also directed the ACC to send the order sheet to the

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2ND PANDEMIC HAJJ Pilgrims arrive in Makkah

AFP, Makkah

Pilgrims began arriving in the holy city of Makkah yesterday for the second downsized hajj staged during the coronavirus pandemic, circling Islam's holiest site in masks and on distanced paths.

The kingdom is allowing only 60,000 fully vaccinated residents to take part, seeking to repeat last year's success that saw no virus outbreak during the five-day ritual.

This year's hajj, with participants chosen through a lottery, is larger than the pared-down version staged in 2020 but drastically smaller than in normal times, stoking resentment among Muslims abroad who are barred once again.

After being loaded on buses and brought to Makkah's Grand Mosque, pilgrims began performing the "tawaf", the circumambulation of

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PHOTO ON PAGE 10



The capital's Karwan Bazar wholesale kitchen market is crowded with people who violate health safety rules amid the rise in novel coronavirus cases in recent weeks. With the lockdown eased for eight days for Eid, more people are coming out of their homes to kitchen markets and shopping malls in the city. The photo was taken around 7:00am yesterday. Story on page 3.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

POST-EID 14-DAY LOCKDOWN Govt in a dilemma over factories

Public ad state minister says curbs to be even stronger this time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While the state minister for public administration warned that the upcoming lockdown after Eid will be stricter than the last, the government is yet to decide whether export-oriented factories will be operational or not during that time.

"We will transition from a strict lockdown to a stricter one during the next 14-day lockdown that will start right after Eid," said Farhad Hossain, public administration minister, while addressing the media at a Border Guard Battalion programme in Chudanga.

However, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi had earlier told The Daily Star that he had been facing a lot of pressure from the business communities, especially export-oriented garment-makers, to let the factories stay open.

"I will have a meeting with government high-ups and the expert committee very soon to find ways to keep the factories running during the lockdown," he said.

A high official of the commerce ministry yesterday told The Daily Star that the garments owners are negotiating with the government.

"This is a national emergency so the health issue will get importance, but the demands made by the garments owners is also logical. Their demands are being considered with special importance," said the source.

He, however, said the factories producing daily essentials like sugar, oil or flour will remain open to keep the supply chain intact.

The cabinet secretary was supposed to meet the prime minister to make a decision about whether or not to

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