

## A dozen patients

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other patients. That is why we have sent them back to their homes.”  
He added, “Our hospital has an isolation unit designated for new patients. If any new patient comes, we keep them in the isolation unit for 14 days and then we shift them to the main unit. But we don’t have any facility to provide treatment to Covid-19 patients. So, we don’t have an alternative to sending them back home.”

Meanwhile, the hospital is providing guidelines for the families of the affected to take care of the patients while maintaining health safety rules.

Apart from the patients, at least three doctors and seven nurses of the hospital tested positive for Covid-19 and they all are in home isolation.

## Former UPDF

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Hospital for autopsy.  
“The victim’s brother filed a case while we are trying to arrest the criminals,” said the OC.  
Aongay Marma, the spokesperson of UPDF, said “Kholo was our former member.”  
On June 26, another former UPDF member was abducted and stabbed to death in remote Dighinala upazila of Khagrachhri.  
“The criminals are killing our former members to create a new situation in Chattogram Hill Tracts,” said Aongay.

## Vaccination rate

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Finance Minister Rishi Sunak will both self-isolate in line with national guidance, abandoning heavily criticised plans to take part in a pilot scheme that would have allowed them to continue working.  
The U-turn comes a day after Health Minister Sajid Javid said on Saturday he had tested positive for Covid-19 and at a time when the government’s coronavirus response is under intense scrutiny.  
Javid said he was self-isolating – just as his government prepared to jettison most pandemic restrictions in England.  
The government insists that with two-thirds of the adult population now fully vaccinated, the risk can be managed, and many UK media dubbed today as “freedom day.”  
Munira Wilson, health spokeswoman for the opposition Liberal Democrats, said Javid’s test result “shows no one is safe from this deadly virus.”  
Urging the government “to rethink its reckless plans for Monday”, she said: “By easing all restrictions with cases surging, they are experimenting with people’s lives.”

The surge in infections sweeping Britain led to more than 530,000 people being instructed to self-isolate by a government-run app in the week to July 7, according to latest data.

Two athletes became the first to test positive for the coronavirus in the Tokyo Olympic Village, officials said yesterday, as new border rules in Europe caused last-minute travel frustration.

Less than a week before the Olympics is due to begin, the cases will heighten concerns over the event.

Organisers have described the Games as the world’s “most restrictive sports event”, but it faces opposition in Japan over fears it will bring new infections to a country already battling a surge, reports AFP.

A daily tally of new cases revealed two athletes tested positive in the Village and one elsewhere. They come a day after an unidentified person, who was not a competitor, became the first case in the village.

Britain is also facing a backlash over its decision to exclude France from its new looser entry policies – vaccinated returning UK residents will still have to quarantine for 10 days, unlike in other “amber” countries.

## Journo arrested

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due honorarium to multipurpose health volunteers.  
Shamima filed a complaint with Bogura Sadar Police Station on Saturday night over the post. Police carried out an investigation and found that the Facebook ID was operated by Akhtaruzzaman, said Emran Mahmud Tuhin, inspector of Detective Branch (DB) of Police in Bogura.

Asked, Md Selim Raza, officer-in-charge of Bogura Sadar Police Station, said, “A team of DB police arrested Akhtaruzzaman from his house around 3:00am today. Hours later, a case was filed against him under the Digital Security Act.”

“In primary interrogation, he [Akhtaruzzaman] admitted that he uploaded the post from a fake ID on provocation from some multipurpose health volunteers.”

Contacted, both Mishu and Shamima refuted the corruption allegations and claimed that the volunteers were given proper honorarium as per rules.

Talking to this correspondent, Akhtaruzzaman’s father Md Rafiqul Islam said, “A team of police along with Samir Hossain Mishu came to our Sabgram house around 3:00am and took away my son and his electronic devices.”



**Palestinian women argue with an Israeli security force member after brief clashes erupted between Israeli police and Palestinians at al-Aqsa Mosque over visits by Jews on the Tisha B'Av fast day to the compound known to Muslims as Noble Sanctuary and to Jews as Temple Mount, in Jerusalem's Old City yesterday.**

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Carry on efforts to improve the lot of people

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Hasina reiterated her call to the people to maintain the health protocols to check further spread of the lethal virus.

“I know, people like to go to their village homes [to celebrate the Eid-ul-Azha with their near and dear ones],” she said and asked the government officials to make sure that people, particularly the home-goers, use masks by making them aware about the virus.

The PM said her government has taken required measures so that no one remains out of the inoculation. “We have started [mass] vaccination. More vaccines are coming. We will purchase whatever amount of jabs is required to bring all the people under vaccination,” she added.

Describing the government officials as the main driving force to pursue the country’s development spree, Hasina said, “You’re those who help run the wheels of the

economy and quicken the country’s development.”

The premier thanked all the government officials for their brave role in tackling the Covid-19 onslaught, saying that the country’s situation could have worsened during the pandemic if they did not perform their duties accordingly.

Hasina said her government has been able to move the country towards a developing nation as it is in power for the third consecutive term after the 2008 national election.

But she opined that the coronavirus is becoming an impediment to Bangladesh’s advancement, saying, “The coronavirus has plunged the entire world into a crisis. No such crisis has ever been before. We have specified the work plan to overcome the crisis.”

The PM said her government announced 28 stimulus packages involving Tk 1,31,641 crore to keep running the lives and livelihoods

amid the pandemic.

She said her government has been giving topmost priority to ensuring socio-economic uplift of the grassroots people.

Hasina said Bangladesh will definitely advance towards the development following the spirit of the Liberation War as envisioned by the Father of the Nation overcoming all the hurdles, including the Covid-19 pandemic.

The premier mentioned that the government has introduced the method of APA in the 2014-2015 fiscal year for the public sector to ensure institutional transparency, accountability, proper utilisation of resources and, above all, enhancing the institutional efficiency.

This is for the eighth time that such an agreement has been signed between the cabinet secretary on behalf of the prime minister and secretaries of the ministries concerned.

Under the agreement, the

ministries will set their visions, missions and strategic goals in line with the development priorities of the government, take short- and long-term plans as per budgetary allocations.

On behalf of the prime minister, Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque later distributed crests and certificates among the top 10 ministries and divisions in the FY 2019-20 APA performances and integrity awards among top three ministries following receipt of the APAs signed for the FY 2021-2022.

State Minister for Public Administration Ministry Farhad Hossain, MP, spoke at the function while Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam gave the welcome address.

A video documentary on the APA performance and its contribution to the country’s overall development was also screened.

## Journey home may worsen today

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Some 16.93 lakh mobile phone users left Dhaka on July 15 and 16, according to data of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC). Mustafa Jabbar, minister for posts, telecommunications and information technology, shared the information on his Facebook account yesterday.

**HEAVY TRAFFIC ON DHAKA-TANGAIL-RANGPUR HIGHWAY**

Like the previous two days, the highway -- a gateway to the northern districts -- witnessed heavy traffic of vehicles carrying home-goers and cattle-laden trucks yesterday.

As a result, a tailback of a large number of vehicles was created on both sides of Bangabandhu Bridge in Tangail and Sirajganj early yesterday. Traffic congestion, however, started easing after 10:00am.

But a head-on collision between a passenger bus and a truck at Soratool area in Kalihati upazila at around 4:00am, left 10 people injured.

Although police and fire service members rescued the injured and sent them to Tangail General Hospital, vehicular movement on

the busy highway remained halted for one hour, causing a long tailback there.

A total of 32,713 vehicles crossed the bridge in 24 hours till yesterday 6:00am and the authorities collected Tk 2.82 crore in tolls, sources said.

Meanwhile, the launch terminal for the Shimulia-Banglabazar route witnessed crowds in the morning and many of the launches were seen operating with more than the stipulated passengers, violating the health safety guidelines, reports our Munshiganj correspondent.

The ferry terminal also witnessed a tailback of private vehicles in the morning but which eased as the day progressed.

Visiting the Paturia-Daulatdia ferry terminal around 1:30pm yesterday, our Manikganj correspondent found ferry services at almost the usual levels.

**PRESSURE LIKELY TO RISE TODAY**  
The five-day Eid holiday, including the weekend, will start from Tuesday but many people will leave Dhaka during the second half of today.

Romesh Chandra Ghosh, chairman of the Bangladesh Bus Truck Owners

Association, said the number of passengers was low yesterday but vehicles still faced tailbacks on the Dhaka-Tangail highway and at ferry terminals.

“Buses are running four to five hours behind schedule due to traffic congestion on this route. But we are fearful about what will happen once the holiday starts,” he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Asked about allegations of overcharging by bus operators, he said many buses are being operated from outside the terminals and they have very little to do regarding those buses. Mosharref Hossain, general manager of Hanif Paribahan, echoed Romesh.

He said buses returning from south and south-western districts via the Paturia-Daulatdia route faced delays while returning. Buses had to wait for hours at Daulatdia terminal to cross the river to give way for cattle-laden trucks and faced traffic jams on the Nabnagar-Gabtoli road due to a large cattle market at Gabtoli.

He said the situation may worsen once the garment workers start to leave Dhaka from today.

Around 40 lakh workers are involved in the garments sector, of which 70 percent are from Dhaka, Narayanganj, and Gazipur.

Meanwhile, Sadarghat Launch Terminal saw a greater number of passengers yesterday as compared to Saturday.

A total 95 launches left the country’s largest terminal on Saturday while 60 launches left till 7:00pm yesterday, said Zainal Abedin, joint director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

“Forty more launches are likely to leave till tomorrow [Monday],” he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The number of passengers is likely to increase today, he added.

Meanwhile, Masud Sarwar, Kamalapur station manager, said 34 inter-city and local trains were being operated from Dhaka to different districts.

“Although there is a crowd of passengers outside the station we are not allowing any passengers without tickets,” he told this correspondent.

Meanwhile, several special trains carrying cattle reached Dhaka from different districts yesterday.

## Armenian court rejects challenge to PM’s re-election

AFP, Yerevan

Armenia’s top court on Saturday threw out a challenge by opposition parties to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s victory in snap parliamentary polls last month.

Although Pashinyan’s Civil Contract party won the June vote by a landslide in polls internationally praised as well run and competitive, opposition parties have alleged electoral irregularities.

An alliance of parties led by ex-president Robert Kocharyan asked the constitutional court to overturn the election results.

On Saturday, the court rejected the demand and “ruled to uphold the central election commission’s June 27 decision on summing up the parliamentary elections’ results,” said the court’s chair Arman Dilanyan.

## Scientists stunned

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the convective heat needed to generate lightning storms.

But as climate change warms the Arctic faster than the rest of the world, that’s changing, scientists say.

Episodes of summer lightning within the Arctic Circle have tripled since 2010, a trend directly tied to climate change and increasing loss of sea ice in the far north, scientists reported in a March study published in the journal Geophysical Research Letters. As sea ice vanishes, more water is able to evaporate, adding moisture to the warming atmosphere.

“It’s going to go with the temperatures,” said co-author Robert Holzworth, an atmospheric physicist at the University of Washington in Seattle.

These electrical storms threaten boreal forests fringing the Arctic, as they spark fires in remote regions already baking under the round-the-clock summer sun. Boreal Siberia in Russia gets more lightning than any other Arctic region, Holzworth said.

The paper also documented more frequent lightning over the Arctic’s treeless tundra regions, as well as above the Arctic Ocean and pack ice. In August 2019, lightning even struck within 60 miles (100 kilometers) of the North Pole, the researchers found.

In Alaska alone, thunderstorm activity is on track to increase three-fold by the end of the century if current climate trends continue, according to two studies by scientists at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, published over the last year in the journal Climate Dynamics.

“What used to be very rare is now just rare,” said Rick Thoman, a climate scientist with the University of Alaska Fairbanks. As the parade of Arctic storms this week demonstrated, lightning is already appearing in unexpected places, he said. “I have no memory of three consecutive days of this kind of thing” in the Arctic.

With the sharp uptick in lightning, Siberia has seen increasingly ferocious forest fires in recent years.

## Bangabandhu

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off the tracks by mines,” it added.

The Pakistan army responded in kind, the Weekly commented. After guerrillas blew up a bridge north of Dhaka, Punjabi soldiers put several neighbouring villages to the torch, killing scores of residents and taking others into custody, reported Newsweek correspondent Jenkins.

He also provided a terrifying account of the Pakistan army’s response to the assassination of a pro-army official in Khulna named Ghulam Sarwar Mullah: “The morning after Sarwar was beheaded, workers travelling to Khulna’s jute mills found seventeen dead bodies lined up neatly in front of the railroad station. Their hands had been tied behind their backs and each man had been shot. The army left the bodies in view for a full 24 hours to make sure the population got the message.”

Newsweek quoted a Western diplomat in Dhaka who said, “It may be too early to view the Mukti Bahini as a serious military threat. But there is no doubt that what we are witnessing is the first stage of bloody, long-lasting guerrilla warfare. ...Yahya Khan and the military high command thought they could terrorise the Bengalis but the result has been just the opposite. Sure the Bengali has been frightened. But he has also been made to hate as he never did before—and he realizes that it is only through violence that he has a chance to free himself.”

**US STOPS AIRLIFTING REFUGEES IN INDIA**

The United States airlift of East Pakistani refugees away from the border areas of India ended yesterday at the request of the Indian government, an American embassy spokesman said.

Four C130’s moved about 23,000 people from the eastern territory of Tripura to Assam in the last four weeks.

The spokesman said India had asked that the airlifts last a month and had not sought any extension. The reason given was that bad weather, which led to the cancellation of 44 flights, would become even worse and make flying very difficult.

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## United Air voices worry over sale of eight planes

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The cargo village area apparently turned into a dumping place for these abandoned aircraft, which have occupied a large portion and is disrupting loading and offloading of goods at the main parking zone, airport sources said.

United Airways, GMG, and Regent Airways owe the CAAB around Tk 750 crores as outstanding bills, he said.

“At least four to five cargo aircraft in the cargo village area could have been accommodated if the abandoned planes were removed.”

Of the total arrears, the CAAB is supposed to get around Tk 190 crore from United Airways.

The CAAB has formed a four-

member high-powered committee, with AHM Touhid-Ul Ahsan as its convener to find out ways how to float tender to sell those aircraft.

Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman, CAAB chairman, earlier told this correspondent that they have served several notices to the respective authorities, asking them to remove those aircrafts from the airport premises and to pay the outstanding money.

“But we didn’t get any response from them. That’s why we have finally decided to confiscate those aircraft.”

In February 2016, United Airways ceased flights without any announcement. The airline began operation on July 10, 2006, after receiving approval from the CAAB in

2005.

Earlier in February, Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) took the initiative to revive operation.

As part of this, BSEC reorganised the board of directors of the now defunct airlines with Kazi Wahidul Alam, an aviation expert and editor of the Bangladesh Monitor, an aviation and tourism based weekly magazine, as its chairman.

Tasbirul Alam Chowdhury was removed as the head of the board of directors of United Airways, which was listed with the BSEC in 2010. The company is listed with the BSEC but its transaction is now closed.

The airlines was the first private

airline listed with the stock exchange.

In a letter, it urged the CAAB to allow the airlines’ officials and its technical teams to visit their aircraft for technical audits and to take the next course of action.

The airlines also said they are hoping to relocate their aircraft soon.

“We were informed that those planes are at least 50 percent capable of flying. That’s why we are hopeful those can fly again after necessary maintenance,” the airlines said.

“Apart from the owners, who hold 1.5 lakh of the shareholders, different banks have also invested in the airlines who are deeply concerned about the CAAB’s initiative of auctioning off the aircraft,” the letter read.

## 23 killed in wall collapse, landslide in Mumbai

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with the rainwater.”  
In the suburb of Vikhroli in the city’s northeast, six people were killed after a landslide hit five homes early yesterday, the NDRF added.

Building collapses are common during India’s June-September monsoon season, with old and rickety structures buckling under days of non-stop rain.

Last month, 12 people were killed

when a building collapsed in a Mumbai slum.

And last September, 39 people died when a three-storey apartment block collapsed in Bhiwandi near the financial capital.

Mumbai has been hit by downpours since Saturday, with local transport services affected.

The city’s civic body did not say when the water supply was expected

to be restored, but advised residents to boil the liquid before using it.

The Indian Meteorological Department said early yesterday that “moderate to heavy rain or thundershowers” were forecast for the next two days.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted his condolences and added that there would be financial compensation for victims’ families.