

**AFGHAN CONFLICT**  
Foreign missions in Afghanistan call for Taliban ceasefire as rivals agree to meet again after inconclusive doha talks  
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# The Daily Star

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## POST-EID LOCKDOWN: JUL 23-AUG 5 Offices, factories to stay shut

Last-minute decision leaves factory owners, workers in a fix

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All workplaces, including factories and offices, will stay shut during the fortnight-long lockdown starting July 23, as per the latest gazette notification that came on the eve of the three-day Eid vacation.

The eleventh-hour decision from the government, after sitting on the fence over the issue for three whole days in the face of fervent lobbying from the garment sector, has left millions of workers and factory owners in a predicament.

Some industries are exempt, as per the gazette published by the Cabinet Division, and workers of those factories would have to scramble to reach their workstations from their villages after Eid celebrations.

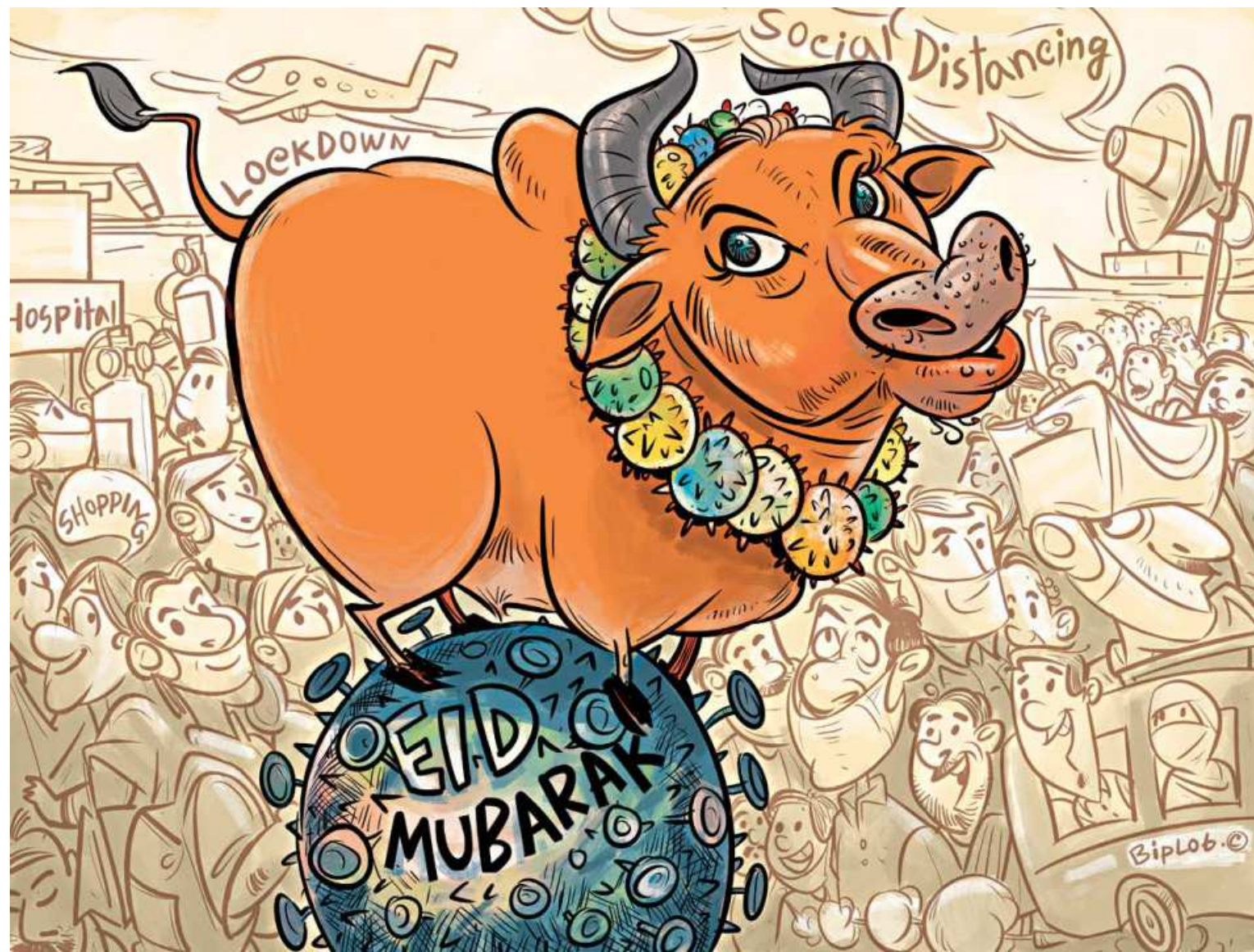
Eid-ul-Azha will be celebrated in Bangladesh on July 21. The lockdown takes effect at 6:00am on July 23, during which all forms of public transport -- including trains, domestic flights and water routes -- and personal vehicles will be prohibited from the streets and highways. Only vehicles carrying emergency goods are allowed.

The industries exempt from the order are those involved in the production of food items like mills, processing and preserving of animal hides, manufacturing of drugs, supplying oxygen, and producing items for tackling Covid-19.

Only those garment factories or units that make face masks and personal protective equipment can run during the lockdown that ends on August 5, said a senior official of the commerce ministry.

The order does not exempt the export-oriented garment

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**EID MUBARAK**

The Daily Star wishes its valued readers, patrons, advertisers and well-wishers a very happy Eid

**HOLIDAY NOTICE**

The Daily Star offices will remain closed for 3 days from today on account of Eid-ul-Azha. There will be no issue of the newspaper from July 21-23. However, our digital version will serve the readers 24/7 during the holiday.

## PEGASUS SPYWARE Bangladesh among infected locations

Int'l media suggests; Dhaka denies buying it

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh is reportedly among 45 countries where people have been spied upon with the Pegasus spyware, created by Israeli company NSO Group.

Reports by a number of major international news outlets said rights activists, journalists, politicians and jurists in 45 countries across the world have been targeted since 2016 with the spyware that works on iPhones and Android devices.

The spyware can harvest data, turn on mic and camera of a smartphone without the user's input, track location, and record keystrokes, the reports said. In some cases, it can be installed without the need to trick a user into initiating a download.

NSO Group sold the software to at least 10 countries and scores of its clients.

Seventeen news organisations in 10 countries launched the Pegasus Project, an investigative reporting consortium, following a massive leak. The probe was coordinated by the Paris-based journalism non-profit Forbidden Stories and advised by Amnesty International.

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## Record Covid deaths ahead of Eid

231 die in 24hrs, 13,321 infected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country yesterday logged a record 231 daily Covid deaths raising the total number to 18,125.

In the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, 13,321 people tested positive for the virus. Of them, the highest 4,834 cases were recorded in the capital with a positivity rate of 30.31, up from 23.61 percent a week ago.

Amid relaxation of the Covid restrictions ahead of the Eid-ul-Azha, virus transmission in Dhaka city has been rising steadily. The positivity rate in the city was 20.24 percent on July 1.

The south-western districts in Khulna

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## VACCINES UNDER COVAX Helping homeland in hour of need

4 US citizens of Bangladesh origin worked behind the scene to ensure vaccines available at the earliest



PROF DR CHOUDHURY HAFIZ AHSAN



MAHMUD USH SAMS CHOUDHURY



PROF DR MASUDUL HASSAN



PROF DR ZIAUDDIN AHMED SADEK

GOLAM MORTOZA

When Bangladesh was struggling to get Covid-19 vaccines amid surging infections and deaths, the arrival of 26 lakh vaccine doses over the last one month under the Covax facility offered it a ray of hope.

And from behind the scene, four US citizens of Bangladeshi origin played a pivotal role in expediting the process of bringing the vaccines to the country, boosting the government's inoculation campaign that came to a grinding halt after India suspended vaccine export.

The four are: cardiologists Prof Dr Choudhury Hafiz Ahsan and Prof Dr Masudul Hassan, nephrologist Prof Dr Ziauddin Ahmed Sadek and former senior UN official Mahmud ush Sams Choudhury.

They were assisted in various ways by several others, including prominent physician Prof ABM Abdullah in Bangladesh and Prof Ahmedul Kabir in Canada.

It was their restless efforts that paved the way for Bangladesh getting the free Covid jabs shared by the

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## HAIJ IN PANDEMIC Pilgrims flock to Mt Arafat

AFP, Mount Arafat

Muslim pilgrims ascended Saudi Arabia's Mount Arafat yesterday in the high point of this year's hajj, being held in downsized form and under coronavirus restrictions for the second year running.

Just 60,000 people, all citizens or residents of Saudi Arabia, have been selected to take part in this year's hajj, with foreign pilgrims again barred.

The mask-clad faithful, who had spent the night at camps in the Valley of Mina, converged on Mount Arafat where it is believed the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) delivered his final sermon, for the most important of the hajj rituals.

Being one of the lucky few "gives you a feeling that our Allah is forgiving and has chosen us to be in this place," said Selma Mohamed Hegazi, a 45-year-old Egyptian.

"Allah willing, our prayers will be accepted,"

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Ignoring physical distancing, home-goers stream into a launch to cross the Padma as soon as the vessel reached the Shimulia Ghat in Munshiganj's Louhajang upazila around 9:30am yesterday. The rush of people leaving the capital for their village homes reached its peak yesterday with Eid tomorrow.

PHOTO: SAJJAD HOSSAIN

## Sufferings all along the way home

Eid holiday makers endure crowded vessels, clogged highways

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ignoring the health safety guidelines and enduring myriad hardships, thousands of people left Dhaka yesterday to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha with their near and dear one at their ancestral homes.

There was a sharp rise in the number of home-goers from the afternoon as many rushed to bus and launch terminals and train stations immediately after completing their last day of work before the Eid holidays.

People heading towards the northern districts suffered immensely due to traffic congestion on the Dhaka-Mymensingh and Dhaka-Tangail-Rangpur highways. People heading for south-western districts faced hardships at ferry terminals on the Padma river.

Allegations of overcharging and violation of health safety guidelines, including carrying passengers at 50 percent capacity, were rampant against bus and launch operators. Many passengers were found without face masks. The rains added to their hardship.

The home rush intensified on a day when the country recorded the highest single-day death toll from Covid-19 -- 231 -- yesterday.

The government relaxed the strict lockdown for eight days from Thursday for Eid, which will be celebrated tomorrow. It took the decision despite many experts warning that lifting restrictions may lead to further spikes in infections and deaths.

The country will be put under "lockdown" again from July 23 to

August 5, as per the government's earlier announcement.

**CROWDS AT TERMINALS, JAMS ON ROADS**

People in the thousands thronged different intercity bus terminals from the morning, but the number saw a sharp rise in the afternoon.

Lutfar Rahman, a private service holder, came to Mohakhali bus terminal around 2:00pm to go to his Sirajganj home after attending his office at Narayanganj's Kanchpur.

"But I failed to get a ticket after going to four counters. I don't know how I will go home," Lutfar told this correspondent around 2:30pm.

More than 300 people were seen in line for tickets of Ena Paribahan buses to Mymensingh.

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