

The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

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ZILHAJ 15, 1442 HURI

16 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00



Iraq PM Mustafa al-Kadhimi says his country no longer requires American combat troops to fight extremists
SEE PAGE 6



"The number of Covid cases has increased five to six times following Eid holidays."
HEALTH MINISTER ZAHID MALEQUE



"The living standards of about 15 percent of the country's people, or about 2.45 crore, have fallen below the poverty line during the one year of the Covid pandemic."
JATIYA PARTY CHAIRMAN GM QUADER



"In terms of whether or not it will stop the Taliban, I think the first thing to do is to make sure that they [Afghan forces] can slow the momentum."
US DEFENSE SECRETARY LLOYD AUSTIN ON AFGHAN CONFLICT

Hospitals stare at tougher time

Govt wary of full-blown medical crisis in coming weeks as Covid infections, deaths remain high despite lockdown

ZYMA ISLAM and MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

The Covid pandemic has entered a phase where hospitals across the country are being pushed to their limits.

General beds are scarce, while it requires days of queues and lobbying to get critical care beds.

With more and more Covid patients needing hospital admission, Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said the healthcare system is overwhelmed.

"There will be no space in hospitals for patients if the novel coronavirus infections continue to rise," he told journalists.

Yesterday, three out of every 10 samples tested positive for Covid.

About one-third of the hospitals providing Covid treatment had bed occupancy rate of more than 75 percent over

ICU BED SITUATION

GOVT HOSPITALS IN DHAKA
40 vacant out of 393

PVT HOSPITALS IN DHAKA
89 vacant out of 505

HOSPITALS IN DHAKA
129 vacant out of 898

COUNTRYWIDE
232 vacant out of 1,321

the past week, according to government data.

There are 336 Covid-dedicated hospitals in the country, and 24 of those are at full capacity with no empty bed, shows data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The intensive care units (ICUs) in almost all of these hospitals are filled to capacity.

The ICU bed occupancy rate at hospitals across the country was 87 percent

yesterday.

Talking to journalists, Zahid said, "To bring down the number of Covid patients, we have to reduce infections."

Everyone has to abide by the restrictions during the ongoing lockdown to reduce Covid cases, he noted.

Mentioning that virus infections have

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Tanker trucks are being filled with oxygen from the special train, Oxygen Express, on the western side of the Bangabandhu Bridge in Sirajganj yesterday. This is the first time railways have been used to import oxygen from India.

PHOTO: STAR

FERRY RAMS BRIDGE Probe body asks for terminals to be moved

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A probe committee of the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) has recommended shifting the current locations of the ferry terminals on the Shimulia-Banglabazar route to avoid further collision between the vessels and the Padma bridge.

The four-member panel, which was formed after a ferry rammed into a pillar of the long-cherished bridge on Friday, found the acting master and the helmsman of the vessel responsible for the incident.

The master gives directions to the helmsman, who holds the wheel of the ferry.

The duo did not take the velocity of the current and wind into consideration when they attempted to cross the Padma river en route to Shimulia of Munshiganj from Banglabazar of Madaripur through the gap between the 16th and 17th pillar of the bridge.

Strong current made the vessel named

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Govt wakes up to oxygen crunch

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The government has asked providers to boost oxygen supplies and made plans to reign in excessive wastage of the life-saving gas in hospitals and install Pressure Swing Absorption oxygen generators in facilities with no central oxygen system.

The health ministry has also opened a central dashboard for officials to constantly monitor the state of oxygen supplies across the country.

The moves come amid runaway infections of coronavirus and the ever increasing number of hospitalisations with Covid-19. This has also caused a spike in the demand for oxygen at the hospitals.

On Saturday, the demand for liquid oxygen was 230 tonnes. The average daily demand for liquid medical oxygen was between 210 and 220 before the Eid holidays, according to DGHS data.

The numbers indicate that experts were right in fearing that the lifting of coronavirus restrictions around the Eid would bump up new cases of Covid-19 which would eventually result in increased demand for medical oxygen.

"Apprehending a possible surge in cases, we told oxygen producers and suppliers that we will

- ➔ Oxygen suppliers asked to ramp up their capacity
- ➔ Wastage of oxygen in hospitals to be minimised
- ➔ Central dashboard opened to monitor supply situation
- ➔ Govt to encourage local oxygen production

provide the support they need for ensuring proper oxygen supply," ABM Khurshid Alam, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), told The Daily Star yesterday.

DGHS officials held a meeting with the oxygen suppliers before Eid and requested them to ramp up the production and supplies.

Besides, a committee headed by DGHS Director Samiul Islam has been formed to coordinate the supply in government and private Covid-19 dedicated hospitals.

On the newly launched dashboard, officials will be able to have live updates on the situation

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

Dengue may add to health crisis

Says health minister; govt mulling designated treatment facilities; record 105 in hospital in 24hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Zahid Maleque fears that the country may face a new health crisis as the number of dengue patients continues to rise along with Covid cases.

The government is planning to designate hospitals for dengue treatment, considering the current situation, he told journalists yesterday after visiting a field hospital at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

His comments came as at least 105 people with dengue got admitted to hospitals across the country in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday -- the highest in a single day this year. At least 104 dengue patients were admitted to hospitals in the previous 24 hours.

A total of 1,679 people have so far been diagnosed with dengue this year, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Of them, 1,307 cases were recorded in July, indicating a fast-rising trend in dengue infections. In June, 272 cases were recorded and the number was 43 in May.

The viral disease, spread by Aedes mosquitoes, seems to be largely concentrated in the capital as only 47 cases were

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

BUSINESS INCENTIVE BONUS State banks ignore BB objection

Four state-owned commercial banks (SCBs) have disbursed hefty amount of incentive bonuses to their employees, ignoring the Bangladesh Bank's recommendations. The central bank requested the finance ministry on June 20, to bar the SCBs -- Sonali, Janata, Agrani and Rupali Bank -- from paying incentive bonuses given their poor financial health. Sonali provided four incentive bonuses while Agrani gave three and a quarter and Rupali and Janata disbursed three bonuses to every employee. Every incentive bonus is equaled to the basic salary of the employees.

STORY ON B1

Soumya guides Tigers to series win

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh registered their second-highest successful run chase in the shortest format of the game to stamp their dominance on their tour of Zimbabwe, beating the hosts by five wickets in the series-deciding third T20I in Harare yesterday.

Soumya Sarkar's all-rounder performance -- two wickets with the ball and a second fifty of the series -- along with young all-rounder Shamim Hossain's big-hitting (31 not out off 15 balls) helped Bangladesh chase down a 194-run target with four balls to spare.

With this victory, Bangladesh clinched all three titles on their tour, having earlier won the lone Test and inflicting a 3-0 whitewash of the hosts in the ODI series.

It was also Bangladesh's fourth win in a bilateral

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Long queues of people waiting to be inoculated against coronavirus in front of Rajarbagh Police Lines Hospital yesterday morning. The resumption of mass vaccination has been a relief to people and those willing to travel abroad constitute a major part of the queue.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

LPG CYLINDERS Consumers suffer as govt fails to enforce prices



AKANDA MUHAMMAD JAHID

People are having to pay higher than the prices fixed by the regulator for buying Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) because of non-compliance by sellers.

For a 12kg cylinder, retailers are charging Tk 1,050-1,100, which is Tk 150-200, around 23 percent, higher than the price set by the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC), many consumers said.

On June 30, the commission set Tk 891 as the retail price for a 12kg LPG cylinder for the month of July to ensure a win-win situation for both consumers and marketers, as the demand for the fuel has been growing over the last decade.

Currently, LPG use stands at over 12 lakh tonnes, up from 47,000 tonnes in 2009, said industry stakeholders.

At the moment, more than four lakh consumers use LPG by buying from the market. And until recently, consumers

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3