

Govt suspends

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examinees of this year would continue following health guidelines. "SSC and HSC batch of this year have only a little time for taking preparation. So, we would continue their assignment activities," he added.

On July 15, Education Minister Dipu Moni said the government wanted to hold the SSC and its equivalent examinations in the second week of November and the HSC and its equivalent tests in the first week of December.

As part of the exams, SSC candidates will have to submit 24 assignments in three optional subjects in 12 weeks whereas the HSC candidates will have to submit 30 assignments in 15 weeks.

Students were required to submit two assignments per week.

The distribution of assignments, to be prepared on shortened syllabuses for SSC candidates, begun on July 18. For HSC candidates, it will begin on July 26.

The government, in April, started giving assignments to students for its submissions in late April this year. The assignment activities for SSC and HSC candidates of 2022 started in June.

The government introduced assignment activities as it closed all the educational institutions on March 17 last year, around a week after the first cases of coronavirus were detected in the country.

The closure has been extended multiple times since then.

According to the latest announcement, schools and colleges will remain closed until July 31.

Power plant

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The lawyer said SS Power I Limited has given the money in compliance with a directive issued by the HC on May 4.

SS Power I Limited has also given Tk 50,000 to each of the 16 victims, who were injured in the incident, for treatment, he said.

Also, Tk 2.5 lakh has been given to a severely injured victim for better treatment, he added.

Lawyer Rouf said the HC was yet to fix any date for hearing the issue.

Deputy Attorney General Bipul Bagmar, assigned to the HC bench led by Justice M Enayetur Rahim, told this correspondent that he did not know whether SS Power I Limited had submitted any compliance report to the bench.

He, however, said the state has earlier taken time from the HC bench for submitting the probe reports of the committees led by the deputy commissioner and superintendent of police in Chattogram as the inquiries are ongoing.

During hearing two separate writ petitions, the HC bench, on May 4, directed SS Power I Limited to immediately give Tk 5 lakh initially to each of the families of the dead victims.

Seven workers of the SS Power I Limited, an under-construction coal-fired power plant, were killed and at least 21 were injured during a clash with police in Banskhali on April 17.

3 held

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accused after the victim's father filed a case against the three, said Sha Alam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Tongi West Police Station.

CPM seeks

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by Paris-based media non-profit Forbidden Stories and Amnesty International that was shared with a host of publications around the world, including The Wire in India, for a collaborative investigation.

The petition was filed by CPM MP from Kerala John Brittas.

Quoting The Wire report on the issue, Brittas said among the numbers is one that was registered in the name of a sitting Supreme Court judge and this amounts to interfering with the administration of justice and is unprecedented and shocking.

The petition says the government has neither accepted nor denied whether the spyware was bought and used by its agencies.

The government, in a statement, has maintained that there has been no unauthorised interception by its agencies, adding that allegations regarding government surveillance on specific people has no concrete basis or truth associated with it whatsoever.

Calling it a "sensational story" without any substance, the new IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav has said The Wire's report itself "clarifies that the presence of a number does not amount to snooping".

The minister also said that it was "no coincidence" that the news broke a day before the parliament's Monsoon Session started.

On the third day of the session, as Vaishnav rose to speak on Pegasus, Trinamool MP Shantanu Sen snatched his papers, tore, and flung them at Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh. This forced the minister to cut short his speech and lay the paper on the table.

Contending that if the surveillance was done by the Indian government in an unauthorised manner, the petitioner said then the tax payers' money was spent by the ruling party for its personal and political interests and it should not be allowed.

Supreme Court advocate ML



Hundreds of protesters rally in the Tunisian capital Tunis yesterday demanding the government step down after a spike in Covid-19 cases that has aggravated economic troubles.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Over 17 lakh get govt cash support

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lakh after scrutiny of the list of ultra-poor and destitute across the country.

The target beneficiaries included rickshaw-pullers, day labourers, construction workers, farmers, people working at small businesses, and transport workers.

This time, they have selected 17 lakh most vulnerable persons from that list, said an official of the Finance Division.

Meanwhile, the government also started additional open market sale (OMS) centres across the country from yesterday to help low-income people in urban areas buy essentials at a subsidised price. These will continue till August.

At least 813 OMS centres will be operated across the country and the government has allocated another Tk 150 crore from the relief package for this, said the official.

Allocations were made for 20,000 tonnes of rice and 14,000 tonnes of flour -- rice will be sold at Tk 30 per kilogramme and flour at Tk 18 per kg. They are providing a Tk 17 and Tk 10

subsidy respectively per kg of rice and per kg of flour, he added.

Last year, however, rice was sold at a subsidised price of Tk 10 per kg in OMS.

OMS operations have been scaled up in the capital in light of the strict lockdown, said Food Secretary Mosammat Nazmanara Khanum. An additional allocation has been made for this OMS, she added.

Nazmanara said they have included every municipality in the country under the OMS programme this time and are distributing stocks based on the requirements of the district administration offices. Previously, OMS sales only took place in city corporation areas, she added.

Every municipality will get at least two tonnes of rice and one tonne of flour, she said.

The government has also already disbursed Tk 100 crore to the deputy commissioners (DCs) to provide food assistance to the poor in their respective districts based on requests to the national helpline 333. The

helpline provides information on government services and can be used to report social problems.

Pirojpur DC Abu Ali Md Sazzad Hossain told The Daily Star that his office has received Tk 1.15 crore in funds and already distributed Tk 70 lakh to all the upazila nirbahari officers (UNOs) for their areas.

Any person who is in need will get Tk 500 worth of food assistance -- 7kg rice, 1kg lentil, 1kg potatoes, a half-litre of soybean oil, and a half kg of salt -- if they call 333 after verification by their UNO, the DC said.

Satkira DC Mohammad Humayun Kabir said his office has received Tk 1.70 crore for distressed people in the district and has already started distributing the food assistance to the poor.

An official of the Finance Division said they set the fund allocation for food assistance in each district based on the number of unions in it.

Another Tk 1,500 crore of the Tk 3,200 crore package has been allocated to Palli Sanchay Bank, Karmasangsthan Bank, and Palli

Dhaka residents asked

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rickshaws, should be off the streets at night from July 28 onwards, and that the entire city should be evacuated after August 1.

Bombs had been exploded in Dhaka every night for the last two weeks, and gunfire often accompanied the explosions. Detonations heard last night could not be immediately explained. Actions included the mining of roads in the outskirts of Dhaka and bombing attacks on power stations, the city gas supply, homes of people regarded by the guerrillas as enemies, army installations, bridges and communications, added the American newspaper.

The New York Times further reported that reaction of the Pakistan Army was generally rapid and forceful and there had been many arrests of suspects. Army patrols moved constantly through Dhaka and its environs and military guards are stationed at most important buildings. Despite this, guerrillas caused considerable dislocation of essential services since their campaign began two weeks ago and killed a number of persons. There was a steady flow of casualties, according to witnesses, although no estimates of numbers were available.

BANGLADESH STAMPS

The first series of eight Bangladesh postage stamps would be issued on July 29. These stamps were to

replace the Pakistan postage stamps hitherto overprinted 'Bangladesh'. The Bangladesh government authorised the international distribution of these stamps. The first series would be issued for internal mail as well as for external postage. The eight separate designs for this series depicted the struggle for independence of Bangladesh. The designs are the work of Biman Mullick. The stamps were printed by lithographic process on white-coated security paper.

RECOGNITION WHEN IT WILL BE IN OUR BEST INTEREST: INDIRA

At a closed-door meeting today Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi told leaders of opposition parties in parliament that the Bangladesh government would be given recognitions as soon as the government of India was convinced that this would be in the best interests of India and the cause of Bangladesh. Most opposition leaders urged the prime minister that recognition be accorded without further delay. Some of them said that recognition would strengthen the freedom struggle.

SN Mishra, a Congress leader, suggested adoption of a resolution expressing concern at the failure of the United Nations to prevent genocide in Bangladesh. The suggestion was rejected by the government and the leaders of other parties.

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Dhaka streets see more cars and crowds

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Many mentioned medical purposes, while some said they had emergency work. If someone fails to provide satisfactory answer, we are slapping fines," said Traffic Inspector Dulal Hossain at Gabtoli checkpoint.

Amid the rising cases of Covid-19, the government announced another lockdown, which bans operations of trains, domestic flights, river traffic, and personal vehicles, from Friday after an eight-day break for the Eid. There is, however, no restrictions on freight services.

The lockdown will end on August 5 midnight.

Police, Rab, Border Guard Bangladesh and army personnel yesterday set up check posts at different points in the city and the law enforcers

were tough at some of those places.

A mobile court, accompanied by the BGB, fined at least 20 people for not wearing masks in Mirpur.

Police in Dhaka yesterday detained 587 individuals for being outdoors without valid reasons.

Mobile courts fined 233 individuals and shops Tk 1.09 lakh while DMP's traffic division fined 521 motorists Tk 12.72 lakh.

In areas like Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Pragati Sarani and Badda areas, the check posts caused heavy traffic, hampering the movement of office-goers.

At some other places, the check posts seemed to have loosened up and people were seen moving freely.

Visiting some alleys in Mirpur, Mohammadpur and Adabor, this correspondent found a number of

shops and tea-stalls open.

In the morning, there were crowds at the kitchen markets of Mohammadpur Town Hall and Karwan Bazar, while long lines had formed behind TCB trucks selling subsidised lentils, sugar and oil.

Despite the lockdown, holidaymakers were returning to the capital yesterday through the entry points at Gabtoli, Tongi and Jatrabari.

They took detours and walked to their destinations and many of them faced police questioning.

Our correspondent in Gazipur reported that passengers were changing vehicles before every check post and got on another one after crossing it to come to Dhaka and neighbouring districts.

In Manikganj, our correspondent

saw a similar scene on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway.

Meanwhile, hundreds of people, on motorcycles, cars and microbuses travelled across the Padma on ferries between the Daulatdia and Paturia and the Bangla Bazar and Shimulia terminals.

Officials said the travellers were allowed to board the ferries on humanitarian grounds.

Out of 19 ferries, only eight were operating on the Bangla Bazar-Shimulia route. Physical distancing could not be maintained on the crowded ferries, reports our Munshiganj correspondent.

Our Manikganj correspondent reports there were fewer passengers on Daulatdia-Paturia route yesterday, compared to the previous two days.

Indonesia readies more ICUs

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Indonesia has become Asia's Covid-19 epicentre with hospitals deluged, particularly on the densely populated island of Java and on Bali, where oxygen supplies are running thin.

"I'd like to thank all Indonesians for their understanding and support for the curbs that have been effective for 23 days," the president, known as Jokowi, said, adding that infections and hospital bed occupancies had declined, without specifying by how much.

Considerably looser than the previous curbs, Jokowi said the government would gradually adjust some restrictions on "some activities", while allowing traditional markets and restaurants with outdoor areas to open, with some limitations.

Some businesses, from salons and laundries to vehicle repair shops, are now allowed to open.

Indonesia last week reported record-high deaths on four separate

days, the last of which was 1,566 deaths on Friday, bringing cumulative deaths to more than 83,000.

Total infections have climbed to more than 3.1 million, though health experts say both deaths and case numbers have been undercounted.

The average number of Covid-19 deaths reported each day in Indonesia has been increasing for 10 days straight, a Reuters tracker shows.

Senior Minister Luhut Pandjaitan, who oversees the Covid response on Java and Bali, said on Saturday that "deaths have risen due to a number of factors: full hospitals, patients admitted with low saturation, or dying unmonitored in self-isolation", adding that ICUs would be added in areas which have reported the highest number of deaths.

Less than 7% of Indonesia's population of 270 million has been fully vaccinated, with Southeast Asia's largest country primarily reliant on shots produced by China's Sinovac

Biotech

More than 100,000 people protested in Australia, France, Italy, Greece and Tunisia, sparking clashes with police as they railed against Covid-19 measures and government sanctions against the unvaccinated aimed at prodding more people into getting jobs.

In Tunisian capital Tunis, police used pepper spray against protesters who threw stones and shouted slogans demanding that Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi quit and parliament be dissolved after a spike in Covid-19 cases that has aggravated economic troubles.

Australia's New South Wales logged its second-highest daily increase of the year in locally acquired cases yesterday amid fears of a wave of new infections after thousands of people joined an anti-lockdown protest.

"In relation to yesterday's protests, can I say how absolutely disgusted I was. It broke my heart," Gladys

REUTERS, London

British health minister Sajid Javid apologised for and deleted a tweet urging people to take a Covid-19 vaccine and not to "cower" from the virus, saying on Sunday he had made "a poor choice of word".

Javid, who replaced Matt Hancock as health minister last month after his predecessor stepped down for breaking COVID rules by kissing an aide in his office, had been criticised for using the word "cower" when tens of thousands in Britain have died

from the virus and many are trying to keep safe.

Britain, which has one of the highest official COVID death tolls, has shifted its strategy to fight coronavirus from using restrictions to limit its spread to opening up society in the hope vaccines will protect most people from serious illness.

Cases are high, but so is uptake of Covid-19 vaccines, and officials argue the shift is needed to help businesses in sectors such as hospitality and the night-time economy.

Writing on Twitter, Javid said on

Sunday he had "deleted a tweet which used the word 'cower'."

"I was expressing gratitude that the vaccines help us fight back as a society, but it was a poor choice of word and I sincerely apologise. Like many, I have lost loved ones to this awful virus and would never minimise its impact."

On Saturday, he had written that he had recovered after testing positive for Covid, after suffering mild symptoms.

"Please - if you haven't yet - get your job, as we learn to live with, rather than cower from, this virus."

Angela Rayner, deputy leader

of the Labour Party, was one of several lawmakers from opposition parties and people who had lost family members to the pandemic to criticise his use of the phrase "cower from".

"127,000 people have died from this virus, tens of thousands of whom would still be here if it wasn't for the catastrophic failures of your government," she said on Twitter.

"So how dare you denigrate people for trying to keep themselves and their families safe."

Ancient

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Destroyed and sunk along with a wide area of the Nile delta by several earthquakes and tidal waves, Thonis-Heracleion was rediscovered in 2001 in Abu Qir bay near Alexandria, now Egypt's second largest city.

The military vessel, discovered by an Egyptian-French mission led by the European Institute for Underwater Archaeology (IEASM), sank when the famed temple of Amun it was mooring next to collapsed in the second century BC.

A preliminary study shows the hull of the 25-meter flat-bottomed ship, with oars and a large sail, was built in the classical tradition and also had features of Ancient Egyptian construction, Egypt's tourism and antiquities ministry said.

In another part of the city, the mission revealed the remains of a large Greek funerary area dating back to the first years of the 4th century BC, it said.

"This discovery beautifully illustrates the presence of the Greek merchants who lived in that city," the ministry said, adding that the Greeks were allowed to settle there during the late Pharaonic dynasties.

"They built their own sanctuaries close to the huge temple of Amun. Those were destroyed, simultaneously and their remains are found mixed with those of the Egyptian temple."

Ethiopia's Amhara boss urges residents to fight Tigray rebels

AFP, Addis Ababa

Ethiopia's Amhara region yesterday called on all armed residents to mobilise for battle against rebels from conflict-hit Tigray, calling it a "survival campaign", state media reported.

Amhara borders Tigray to the south, and the two regions are embroiled in a decades-old land dispute that has become central to the eight-month-old war in Tigray.

Yesterday's statement from Amhara regional president Agegnehu Teshager echoes a call made Friday by the president of Ethiopia's Afar region just east of Tigray.

Together the two statements highlight the potential for the Tigray war, which Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed declared all but over in late November, to draw in the rest of the country.

"Starting from tomorrow (Monday), I call on all people of age who are armed either at governmental or private level to mobilise for a survival campaign," Agegnehu said.

"We have called on the general public to stand on our side. Now, the public is on our side in every aspect," he added.

"The support we are receiving from civil servants in the region is overwhelming. We are proud of that."

Abiy, winner of the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize, sent troops into Tigray last November to oust the region's ruling party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), a move he said was in response to TPLF attacks on federal army camps.

Fighting dragged on for months before the war took a stunning turn in late June, with pro-TPLF fighters reclaiming the Tigray capital Mekele and Abiy declaring a unilateral ceasefire.

Yet clashes have continued and officials from six regions and the city of Dire Dawa have since said they would send troops to back up government forces.

At least 20 civilians were killed and tens of thousands displaced in fighting in Afar last week, an official said.