

US brings back masks

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daily cases per 100,000 people over seven days, while high is defined as more than 100 daily cases per 100,000 over seven days. SYDNEY EXTENDS CURBS

The coronavirus has killed at least 4,179,675 people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP yesterday.

Millions of Sydney residents will spend another month in lockdown, authorities announced yesterday, citing a still-fast-growing coronavirus outbreak and stubbornly low vaccination rates.

Australia's biggest city had been due to exit five weeks of lockdown on July 30, but the restrictions will now remain in place until August 28 as case numbers continued to climb.

Daily cases in Tokyo topped 3,000 for the first time yesterday, as several neighbouring regions weighed emergency restrictions to tackle a surge in infections.

Tokyo, which is already under a virus state of emergency as it hosts the Olympics, reported 3,117 cases, and Governor Yuriko Koike called on people to avoid "unnecessary, non-urgent outings."

In Myanmar, junta authorities are seeking help from the international community to tackle the coronavirus, state media said yesterday, as the impoverished country looks beyond ally China in its struggle to beat back a new wave.

The nation has been in turmoil since the military took power in February, with many hospitals ill-equipped to cope with a surging caseload after many medical staff walked out in protest at the coup.

COVAX TO GET 250M JABS

Covax is expecting to receive 250 million donated Covid-19 vaccine doses over the

next six to eight weeks, the World Health Organization said yesterday.

The influx of doses is a major boost for the scheme, which is aimed at ensuring poorer countries can access jabs and has so far delivered 152 million vaccine doses to 137 participating territories.

In a weekly operational update issued yesterday, the WHO said that at a recent UN Crisis Management Team meeting it "reported that there will be increased vaccine donations to the Covax facility, projecting an additional 250 million vaccines over the next six to eight weeks".

Covax is co-led by the WHO, the Gavi vaccine alliance and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, with Unicef using its vaccine logistics expertise to handle the delivery flights.

Under Covax, the 92 poorest countries can access jabs for free, with donors covering the cost.

UK TO STAR VACCINE DONATION

Britain announced yesterday it will begin donating millions of coronavirus vaccine doses around the world, including to various Commonwealth countries, following its pledge to provide 100 million jabs globally by next June.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the ramped up rollout of an initial nine million inoculations, to get under way Friday, will go to Kenya, Jamaica and several Asian nations.

"They will go to countries, vulnerable places like Laos and Cambodia, partners like Indonesia, Malaysia (and) a range of Commonwealth countries from Kenya to Jamaica," he said.

"This demonstrates we're not just doing it because it's in our own interest. It shows global Britain as a life-saving force for good in the world."

Sr judicial magistrate dies

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After passing 10th Bangladesh Judicial Service Commission (BJSC) exams, she joined the service as judicial magistrate on March 1, 2018.

"Sania will be buried at the family graveyard at my village home in Tupchar of Barishal's Muladi upazila tomorrow [today]," Imranur said.

Meanwhile, Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, Law Minister Anisul Huq, Supreme Court Appellate Division judge and BJSC Chairman Justice Hasan Foez Siddique, Law and Justice Division Secretary Md Golam

Sarwar and Bangladesh Judicial Service Association President Mohammad Shawkat Ali Chowdhury and Secretary General Bikash Kumar Saha expressed deep shock at the senior judicial magistrate's death.

In separate condolence messages, they prayed for the salvation and eternal peace of Sania's departed soul. They also conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family members of the deceased.

On June 24 last year, Ferdous Ahmed, judge of Lalmonirhat District Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal, died of Covid-19.

Inscription of last Babylonian

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king Nabonidus.

Archaeologists also determined that the scene includes 26 lines of cuneiform script, an ancient system of written used in the Middle East, making these the longest inscription ever found in the kingdom of Babylonia, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage shared in a statement.

King Nabonidus reigned over Babylonia from 556BC until 539BC, but first took the throne after the assassination of the boy-king Labashi-Marduk.

Legend has it that Labashi-Marduk's mother was a priestess of the moon god Sin, who Nabonidus is known to have greatly favored, and he eventually went mad due to his interest in religious archaeology.

There are a number of murals depicting king Nabonidus, some of which look very similar to recently discovered carving - they show him holding a scepter while

surrounded by religious symbols.

The inscribed rock was unearthed in the Al-Hadeed Governorate, in the country's northern Al Hail region.

Al Hail, which was known as "Fadak" in ancient times, "has a great historical significance from the first millennium BC until the early Islamic era," the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage shared in the announcement.

"The area features ancient sites and monuments including castles, fortresses and water installations."

Researchers previously working in the area have uncovered other inscriptions mentioning Nabonidus from the time he ruled until the end when the kingdom fell to Cyrus Persia, Arab News reports.

Babylonia was a state in ancient Mesopotamia, which was founded more than 4,000 years ago as a small port town on the Euphrates River.

Indonesia's Sinabung volcano erupts

AFP, Medan

Indonesia's Mount Sinabung erupted yesterday, spewing a massive column of smoke and ash into the sky.

The eruption of the volcano in North Sumatra province lasted about 12 minutes, a local geological agency said.

"The volcanic material reached 4,500 metres into the air and lasted for quite a long time," the head of the agency's Sinabung monitoring post, Armen Putra, told AFP.

An image shared by the agency showed a column of thick, dark smoke coming from the crater.

Clouds of smoke and ash travelled 1,000 metres away from the peak, the agency added.

No evacuation orders were issued because the debris did not reach the nearest villages and there was no reported disruption to flights in the area.

But authorities have instructed people to avoid a five-kilometre zone around the crater that has been left unoccupied for years as volcanic activity increased.

Sinabung, a 2,460-metre (8,070-foot) volcano, was dormant for centuries before roaring back to life in 2010 when an eruption killed two people.



People wearing protective masks stand in line to receive free meal amid a surge of coronavirus disease cases in Bali, Indonesia yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Modi 'hit soul of India's democracy'

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"I want to ask the people - there is a weapon Narendra Modi has planted in your phones... used against opposition leaders, journalists, activists... should there not be a discussion in Parliament?"

"... if we (the opposition) agree there will be no discussion on Pegasus... the issue will get buried... till the time Pegasus is not discussed in Parliament, we are going nowhere," he stressed.

To accusations the Congress is "not letting parliament run", Gandhi - whose name is on the list of alleged surveillance targets - said: "They say we are disturbing parliament (but) we want to fulfill our responsibilities and this is against the democratic process."

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut, who was part of yesterday's meeting, stressed the opposition is "united in our stand to protect issues of national security, democracy and farmers' welfare".

"Like Rahulji explained, the government has used this weapon as an arrow against democracy and we will not stand for it. This must be discussed in Parliament," he said, pointing out that statements - such as that read out by IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav - did not constitute a discussion.

Apart from the Congress and the Shiv Sena, the CPI and CPM, the Rashtriya Janata Dal, the AAP, the DMK, the NCP, the National Conference and the Samajwadi Party took part in yesterday's meeting.

A number of smaller political outfits - the Muslim League, the Revolutionary Socialist

Party, Kerala Congress, and the Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi - also took part.

The Trinamool Congress - which has announced a first (and so far only) judicial inquiry into the Pegasus allegations - was not present, although MP Derek O'Brien later said the opposition is "100 percent united", and that the Congress had been told of his party's absence yesterday.

Mamata Banerjee, whose nephew and Trinamool MP Abhishek Banerjee is also among the potential targets, met the Prime Minister in Delhi on Tuesday and pitched for a Supreme Court-led inquiry.

Mamata skipped yesterday's meeting of the opposition about the Pegasus scandal, but at a press conference later, made it clear that she was at the forefront of the battle ahead, for which the parties should unite.

Asked who will lead the opposition, she shot back, "I am not a political astrologer. It depends on situation. I have no problem if someone else leads".

Asked if she could be the face of the united opposition, she said, "I am a simple worker, I want to continue as a worker".

Indicating the need for long-term plans, Mamata said the talks will begin properly "after the parliament session", reports our New Delhi correspondent.

"I spoke to Lalu Prasad Yadav yesterday [Tuesday]. We will be talking to all parties," she said, adding that she will meet Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal during her current visit to Delhi.

"There should be a common platform to work together. All political parties in the opposition must work together. We will all sit together and work something out," said the West Bengal chief minister, whose landslide victory in the recent state election in face of the BJP's formidable election machinery has added to her weight in the opposition.

Meanwhile, the private equity firm that owns NSO, the Israeli spyware company at the heart of the Pegasus scandal, is being liquidated, a source close to the company told AFP yesterday, confirming media reports.

London-based Novalpina Capital, which bought the NSO Group in 2019, is being dissolved after a dispute between its co-founders.

Its liquidation leaves the future ownership of NSO unclear, just as the company is grappling with the fallout of a vast electronic espionage scandal.

Novalpina also owns the Estonian casino group Olympic Entertainment and French pharmaceutical company X.O.

The Financial Times reported that Novalpina's investors "have until August 6 to decide whether to liquidate the fund with a fire sale of its assets, or appoint a third party to take control of it".

French business daily Les Echos reported that Novalpina was being liquidated to put an end to an "internal war" between its founders.

But "the espionage scandal may have been the straw that broke the camel's back", it added.

Pakistan preparing for long guerrilla

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Efforts to produce a consensus amongst the Security Council members to support the secretary general's move to post UN observers in Bangladesh and India failed, UN diplomatic sources informed today.

Secretary General U Thant had sent a confidential memorandum to the President of the UN Security Council Morizet of France, drawing his attention both in regard to its humanitarian aspect and political security aspects, including the guerrilla warfare, the rapidly deteriorating situation inside Bangladesh, the possibility of a famine there and also the danger of an India-Pakistan war.

UN OBSERVERS CONSENSUS BID FAILS

The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee today disclosed that it had voted unanimously to cut off foreign military aid unless the Nixon administration give details of its projected military assistance programmes for the next five years.

BHUTTO HOLDS TALKS WITH YAHYA

Pakistan People's Party Chairman Zulfikar Ali Bhutto today had a two-and-a-half-hour meeting with President Yahya Khan, which he later described as "satisfactory and fruitful." He said it would not be proper to say more at this stage as "the course of the talks may get needlessly complicated".

Shamsuddoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com

Rights groups press to free Sri Lanka lawyer

AFP, Colombo

International calls yesterday mounted for the release of a Sri Lankan human rights lawyer and the repeal of anti-terror laws used

to detain him for 15 months.

Eleven rights groups, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Commission of Jurists urged Sri Lanka to free Hejaaz Hizbullah

who has been held since April last year.

Hizbullah's case has also been highlighted by the UN Human Rights Council and the European parliament this year.

Firefighters battle forest blaze near Athens suburbs

AFP, Athens

A fire scorched forests at the base of Mount Penteli north of Athens on Tuesday, threatening suburbs but without causing casualties, firefighters and local authorities said.

Four people were arrested as part of an investigation to determine the cause of the fire, Deputy Civil Protection Minister Nikos Hardalias said on state television ERT, without giving more detail.

The fire, which broke out late morning and was still burning on Tuesday afternoon, had damaged homes, said Yannis Kalafatis, the mayor of Dionysos, one of the areas threatened by the blaze.

"The front of the fire is long and it is not yet over," he added on public television ERT.

"We were so scared," local resident Loukia Mpatola told AFP.

"The fire broke out suddenly and in a

half-hour we could see flames beside the house," she said.

"Fortunately, the authorities warned us." "It's a disaster, all these burnt trees," said another resident, Maria Sofou. "It's unbelievable, setting a fire in a residential zone."

The fire was still not under control at the end of the afternoon, according to firefighters, but "the situation has improved", Hardalias said.

A total of 310 firefighters were mobilised, backed by 10 helicopters and eight firefighting planes, said the fire service, but strong winds were complicating operations.

Volunteers had also joined the fight against the blaze, but firefighters spokesman Vassilis Vathrakoyannis told Skai TV: "Nobody is in danger."

Smoke was billowing from the roofs of two houses and at least three cars had been burned out, an AFP photographer said.

AL leader murdered

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mostly aged between 17 and 19, said the OC.

Foyzal Mamhmd, additional superintendent of police (Bogura Sadar circle), told The Daily Star that Rocky was killed following a feud with his assistant Gausul, 25. As a local AL leader, Rocky used to settle many issues through village arbitration.

Recently, Rocky took the responsibility to collect Tk 8 lakh loan a man was not repaying. Rocky was supposed to get a cut, sources said.

Rocky gave the job of collecting the money to Gausul who allegedly did not give Rocky his cut, which led to a feud, said the police officer.

"We have identified eight to 10 attackers involved in the murder and are trying to arrest them."

Rocky was accused in five cases, including murder, drug and arms, filed with Sadar Police Station, the police officer added.

Abu Sufian Shafiq, Bogura Sadar upazila parishad chairman and president of Bogura Sadar upazila unit AL, told this paper that Rocky was the general secretary of Fapor union.

Some drug dealers of the area killed him over a previous enmity, he said.

This paper could not reach Gausul for his comments.

Bangladesh

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equipment to tackle the virus and also sought US assistance in encouraging its vaccine-producing companies to partner with capable Bangladeshi pharmaceutical companies.

Salman said Bangladesh is ready to make the necessary investments for capacity enhancement of its pharma companies for such partnerships.

Discussions also took place on labour rights and safety, cooperation in energy, climate change, and agriculture, US investment, technology transfer, and restoring Biman flights between Dhaka and New York.

The PM's adviser mentioned about various initiatives to further improve labour rights and safety in Bangladesh. The US side appreciated Bangladesh's persistent efforts and offered its help to make more progress in this regard.

The US was highly appreciative of Bangladesh's recent move to cancel coal-based power plants.

Both sides recognised that the 2020 Economic Partnership Meeting provided momentum to the ongoing collaboration between the two countries. They agreed to hold the second round of the meeting later this year.

Finance Division Senior Secretary Abdur Rouf Talukder, Bangladesh Ambassador to the US M Shahidul Islam, Commerce Secretary Tapan Kanti Ghosh, Economic Relations Division Secretary Fatima Yasmin, and officials of the US State Department also attended the meeting.

House tutor lands

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According to the case statement, Farabi used to offer tuition to the ninth-grader at her home. He had been raping the minor girl for the last two years on promises of marriage.

Recently, in a village arbitration, the accused's father also promised to marry off his son with the girl.

As Farabi's father denied marrying his son, the girl's family filed a case against him.

Receiving the case, police arrested the tutor immediately, said the OC.

President of Natore

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not go to the district town after he was made president of Natore AL.

Quddus, however, did not name any person.

Contacted, State Minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak, also a lawmaker from Natore-3, said Quddus might have pointed his finger at Shafiqul Islam Shimul, general secretary of Natore AL.

Asked about the allegations, Shafiqul, an MP from Natore-2 (Sadar-Naldanga), said, "I have heard the full speech of Quddus bhai. He did not mention my name."

He claimed that Quddus delivered such a speech to satisfy some people and for making political gains.




PRICE SENSITIVE INFORMATION

The Board of Directors of British American Tobacco Bangladesh Company Limited in its meeting dated 28th July 2021 at 7pm approved the investment decision amounting to BDT 322.20 crore (Three Hundred Twenty-Two Crore & Twenty Lac Only) for Company's Savar site factory. This investment would cater the upcoming exports opportunities and create contingency capacity. The investment will be funded from internal sources and bank financing based on Cashflow of the Company.



Md. Azizur Rahman FCS
Company Secretary
BAT Bangladesh
New D.O.H.S. Road, Mohakhali, Dhaka -1206



Procurement & Logistic Support Directorate

Ref: DACPL/Re-OTM No: 118/2020-21 Date: 28/07/2021

Re-OTM No. 118/2020-21

Tender in sealed envelope is hereby invited from interested Manufacturer's Authorized Partner for 03 years duration License Renewal of Endpoint Protection System belongs to Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd.

Tender schedule with details specification of the above item, terms and conditions will be available from the Assistant Manager Accounts (Cash & Banking), Head Office Balaka, Kumitola, Dhaka during office hour of every working day up to 16/08/2021 on cash payment of Tk 1,000.00 (one thousand) (non-refundable) by applying in bidder's own letterhead paid mentioning tender reference No. and date. Tender related information will also be available at Biman website www.biman-airlines.com for ready reference.

Sealed tenders shall be dropped in the tender box kept in (i) Local Purchase Section, Procurement & Logistic Support Directorate, Admin. Building, Biman, Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka and (ii) Biman Balaka Bhaban, Security Counter (Ground Floor), Dhaka latest by 1100 hrs (BST) on 17/08/2021 and shall be opened on the same day at 1400 hrs at the Tender Room of Procurement & Logistics Support Directorate, Admin. Building, Biman, Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka in presence of tenderers (if any). Biman Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tender without assigning any reason thereof.

Swapn Kumer Dey
Manager (Commercial Purchase)

GD-1385