



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

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ZILHAJ 28, 1442 HURI

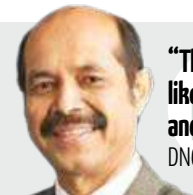
16 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00



"The time has come to reduce the Covid-19 patient. There is no longer any scope to increase beds in hospitals."
HEALTH MINISTER ZAHID MALEQUE



"If the lives of children are at risk, what will we do with education?"
AWAMI LEAGUE GENERAL SECRETARY
OBAIDUL QUADER



"Those who would submit unused items like flower pots, tyres, chips packets and coconut shells will be awarded."
DNCC MAYOR ATIQUUL ISLAM

MASS VACCINATION TRIAL RUN

Into a mire of mismanagement

The govt's good initiative ends up being a probable superspreading event

STAR REPORT

There were just way more people than vaccine doses available.




Many vaccination centres across the country ran out of doses two or three hours after the so-called mass vaccination began.

People stood in mile-long queues on roads, crowds jammed themselves into vaccination centres and brawls broke out, turning into potential superspreading events. As the day progressed, thousands returned without jabs.

But the sheer number of angry crowds fighting to get the shot made it clear that vaccine hesitancy is not an issue.

A private service holder Syed Bin Amir narrated how he was turned away from two centres -- the former for not having an SMS, and the latter because the facility ran out of shots while he was waiting in queue.

"I went to the ward office of Dhanmondi number 15, where I was asked to provide a photocopy of my NID by a volunteer. I went off to get a photocopy, and by the time I came back, they said they had only 300 doses and that I would not get the job," he described. This was at 10:40am, just an hour and a half after vaccination started.

-  Vaccine doses inadequate compared to number of people
-  Protests at several centres demanding vaccines
-  Mishaps led to a few being given two doses

Similarly, Kohinur Khyum Tithila went to Khilgaon Tilpapara Nagar Matrisadan and came back home without a sore arm. "A fight broke out at the centre, and it was so crowded I could not manage to get in. I don't understand why the vaccination programme of a contagious disease would be like this," she said.

In Rangpur, officials ran out of vaccine doses at every single booth at all the 83 unions in eight upazilas, said Civil Surgeon Hirambo Kumar Roy.

Only 250 doses of Sinopharm had been allocated for each booth, which was not enough for the people who gathered to get

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Hospital employees tackle a man, desperate for the coronavirus vaccine, trying to enter the Chattogram City Corporation General Hospital. Hundreds of people began to arrive in front of the facility at daybreak yesterday and around noon, police charged truncheons to control them. Hospital employees said they vaccinated nearly 1,500 people, about half of those who gathered there.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

CASES AGAINST PORI, OTHERS Big fish under scanner: CID

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least half a dozen people, including high officials of two private banks, are on the list of those who had "close contact" with film actor Pori Moni, now behind bars in a narcotics case.



The Criminal Investigation Department of police, which has been tasked with investigating seven cases against the actor, two models and their associates, yesterday said no matter how influential they are, no one will be exempted from the investigation.

In a span of just three days, the CID has been put in charge of investigation as the fourth agency after the Rapid Action Battalion, Detective Branch and local police.

The DB is currently investigating the cases against Pori Moni, models Faria Mahbub Piasha and Moriom Akter Mou, their associate Mishu Hasan, producer Nazrul Islam Raz and expelled Awami League leader Helena Jahangir.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Hospital beds won't increase, do your part

Health minister asks citizens amid Covid surge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It is not possible to increase the number of beds in hospitals any further, so the ordinary citizens must do their part to bring down the infection rate of the coronavirus, which is galloping away, said Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday.

In the past two months, the number of patients has increased seven times, he said while inaugurating a Covid-19 treatment facility at the convention centre of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital.

"We have been setting up more field hospitals and increasing the number of beds. But, that has a limit too."

There is no bed vacant in hospitals' Intensive Care Units (ICU), while almost all of the 17,000 general beds countrywide are occupied, according to Maleque.

As of noon yesterday, 87 percent of the 1,335 ICU beds for Covid-19 patients in the country were occupied, according to data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The occupancy rate was 88 percent against 887 beds in case of the beds in High Deficiency Units (HDUs).

The occupancy rate was 68 percent for the beds that have High Flow Nasal Cannulas (HFNC) and 62 percent for the general beds.

The time has come to bring down the infection rate, Maleque said, adding that the recent Dengue outbreak has created another pressure on

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

COVID-19 SITUATION Country records deadliest week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh yesterday recorded 261 deaths from Covid-19 to cap the deadliest week, ending yesterday, since the first confirmed cases of the coronavirus were announced on March 8 last year.

This is the second-highest number of deaths from Covid-19 as the most virulent Delta variant of the coronavirus, first detected in the country on May 8, continues to wreak havoc.

On Thursday, the country had recorded the highest number of deaths: 264.

In the week, a total of 1,726 died from Covid-19, up 5.3 percent from a week earlier, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

On the bright side, the number of new cases has decreased 2.3 percent despite a 3.5 percent increase in tests.

The DGHS data, however, showed the infection trend was on the up in 21 districts and stable in five districts across the country as of yesterday. In the remaining 38 districts, the infection trend was downward.

Besides, the number of recoveries has

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

MEHENDIGANJ KILLINGS 4 lives lost to bloody rivalry

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and SUSHANTA GHOSH, from Barisal

Four killings in 10 days -- first two on April 11 and then again on April 20. Feuds, especially over the Ullania Union Parishad election and control of illegal toll collections at fishery ghats, led to the bloodshed in Mehendiganj upazila of Barisal.

The election, scheduled to be held on December 10 last year, was postponed following a series of clashes, but the rivalry continued and resulted in the killings.

Police and locals say rebel chairman candidate Ruma Begum and her son first plotted the murder of Saiful Islam Mistry to frame their archrival, Awami League-nominated candidate Abdul Halim Milon Chowdhury.

Saiful, a day labourer, was an easy target as his father was paralysed and his wife was helpless with two little kids. His stepmother Kohinur Begum took part in the murder conspiracy in exchange for Tk 40,000.

After the killing around 1:00am on April 11, Ruma's followers announced from a local mosque's loudspeaker at 3:30am that Milon's supporters had attacked Asha village and committed a murder, police and local sources said.

Hearing the announcement, Milon's supporters came out with sticks to protest this, and got locked into a clash with their rivals, which left a man named Sayed Chowdhury badly injured.

Sayed, who was a supporter of Milon, breathed his last at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital later in the day, said a senior official of the district police.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

Australia scrape to first victory

NABID YEASIN

Batting proved to be Bangladesh's downfall as the Tigers lost the fourth T20I against Australia by three wickets at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, giving up their rare chance of completing a first-ever clean series sweep against the Aussies.

The hard-earned win for Australia was their first in a five-match series that has already been clinched 3-1 by a dominating Bangladesh.

After a compact bowling display, led by leggie Mitchell Swepson, saw Australia restrict Bangladesh to a paltry 104 for nine, the visitors hobbled but eventually managed to chase down the low total with six balls to spare.

Australia had made a clear change to their approach in this game and it was made apparent with them sending Dan Christian at No. 3, ahead of Mitchell Marsh after

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Australia batsman Dan Christian slogs one over midwicket region during his 15-ball 39 against Bangladesh in the fourth T20I at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The whirlwind knock ensured the visitors got over the line with three wickets in hand in a chase of 105 runs to register their first win of the tour.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Red Gold sparks hope

Prof Jamal Uddin grows saffron inside greenhouse at Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University

MAMUNUR RASHID

It has a history stretching back millenniums. Emperors have patronised it, poets have romanticised it, monks have used its colour in their robes and worshippers have adored it. Popularly known as "Red Gold", the crimson hue saffron has been used for culinary, medicinal and aesthetic purposes.

Poet Jibanananda Das had compared the stunning colour of saffron with the setting sun of an autumn evening.

Saffron, one of the most prized and coveted condiments on the planet, had never been a major produce of a warm country like Bangladesh as it is mostly cultivated in cold environment.

But a teacher and researcher of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka has created a scope for growing the spice in the country.

AFM Jamal Uddin, a professor of horticulture at the university, has managed to flowering saffron plants in a temperature-controlled room. He successfully collected red coloured stigma from the flowers. This stigma, the distal ends of the plant's carpels, is separated from the petals by hand and dried to make saffron spice.

"Saffron cultivation is expensive in its usual habitat -- an

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3