

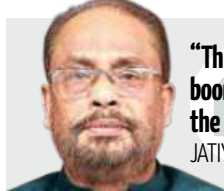


The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



REGD. NO. DA 781 | Vol. XXXI No. 200 | SRABAN 27, 1428 BS | **Your Right to Know** | MUHARRAM 1, 1443 HJRI | 16 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00



"This unplanned mass vaccination program could be a boomerang and Corona could spread more alarmingly due to the neglect of hygiene in the mass vaccination program."
 JATIYA PARTY CHAIRMAN GM QUADER



"Hit on Padma bridge is tantamount to hit on our heart. We don't want our heart get hurt again and again."
 STATE MINISTER FOR SHIPPING
 KHALID MAHMUD CHOWDHURY



"The United States and South Korea will face a more serious security threat by ignoring our repeated warnings to push ahead with the dangerous war exercises."
 SISTER OF N KOREAN SUPREME LEADER KIM YO JONG

MRP SERVER EXHAUSTS CAPACITY Passport delivery STUMBLES

Thousands of migrants left in uncertainty as DIP fails to act in time

PORIMOL PALMA and SHARIFUL HASAN

The passport authorities sat on upgrading the MRP server that had crossed the 30-million limit in early June, causing delay in reissuing passports to tens of thousands of Bangladeshis, mostly migrants in the Gulf and Southeast Asian countries.

It has left the migrants at risk of becoming undocumented or delayed their process to become regular, migrant workers and activists have said.

The issue came to the fore in the last couple of weeks as the migrants made numerous complaints about it -- at a time when they are facing joblessness and uncertainty over life and livelihood abroad amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The Department of Immigration and Passport (DIP) Director General Major



General Mohammad Ayub Chowdhury said the system for machine readable passports (MRPs) requires upgrades from time to time. "Steps have already been taken to upgrade the server and we will extend the contract with the Malaysian company concerned," he told The Daily Star on Sunday.

Passports against pending applications will be printed and delivered once the system is upgraded, he said, without giving any timeframe.

DIP Director Shihab Uddin Khan said they had a target of introducing e-passports within 2020, but their officials could not go to the Bangladesh missions abroad to put the e-passport systems in place due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"That's why the pressure on the MRP server increased and its limit of three crore applications crossed," he said on Monday.

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An excessive crowd at a temporary Covid-19 vaccination centre in the capital's Jurain area forced the authorities to call for police help to conduct their vaccination activities. The photo was taken on Alimul Millat Madrasa premises yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

No first dose of Moderna from tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to suspend administering the first dose of Moderna Covid vaccine from tomorrow.

Issuing a circular yesterday, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) instructed those vaccination centres, which still have Moderna jabs in stock for first dose, to administer those soon and make preparations for administering the second one.

It also said the administering of the second dose of Sinopharm vaccine will start all over the country on August 14. The Chinese vaccine jabs will be dispatched to different parts of the country on the basis of demand, mentioned the circular.

The government started inoculating people with Moderna vaccine in 12

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Curbs relaxed amid fear of virus surge

Record-equaling 264 deaths in 24 hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With most of the restrictions on movement of people and public transports lifted today, health experts warn of a further a surge in Covid deaths and infections.

Yesterday, the country logged 264 deaths, which matched a previous daily record on August 5, taking the virus death toll to 23,161.

The number of deaths in the first 10 days of this month was high -- more than 247 a day on average -- because of higher infection rates, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

In the preceding 10 days, 218 Covid deaths were logged a day on average.

Experts fear that the lifting of the restrictions will lead to a further rise in virus transmission across the country.

Yesterday, 11,164 out of 53,462 samples tested positive for Covid, raising the total number of cases to 13,76,322.

The Covid positivity rate stood at 23.54 percent.

The World Health Organization last year advised governments to consider reopening only when the positivity rate remains below 5 percent for two weeks at a stretch.

"With the lifting of the restrictions, more

people will now go outside and get infected with the novel coronavirus. We will see more pressure on hospitals and a further rise in deaths in the days to come," Prof Ridwanur Rahman, an infectious disease specialist, told this newspaper yesterday.

"Despite the weak enforcement of restrictions, many people did not go outside. The suspension of inter-district bus services had a positive impact and helped check virus transmission," he observed.

Talking to this correspondent, Dr Mushtaq Hussain, consultant at the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), said, "When social gatherings will increase, virus transmission will rise too. This may drive up infections."

Both the experts said the infection rate was in decline since August 2 as a result of imposition of the Covid restrictions by the government. These restrictions should have been in force for at least two more weeks.

DGHS data shows that the Covid positivity rate on August 2 was 29.91 percent, which continued to fall till yesterday.

A government circular on Sunday said public transports -- buses, trains

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Preserve all documents of '71 war

PM asks authorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the authorities to collect and preserve all documents related to the country's Liberation War that are scattered across the world.

Hasina gave the directive while ECNEC approved a Tk 63 crore project aiming to collect and preserve the audio-visual documents of the Liberation War from local and foreign sources, as well as strengthening the capacity of the Bangladesh Film Archive.

"The Prime Minister

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ROUTE UNDER PADMA BRIDGE Heavy vehicles banned on ferry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In order to avert the risks of ferries ramming into pillars of the under-construction Padma bridge, the authorities yesterday decided that ferries will not carry heavy vehicles, like buses and trucks, between Shimulia and Banglabazar terminals as long as there is strong current in the river.

The decision came a day after a ferry rammed into pillar no. 10, damaging its pile cap, which was the third such incident in 20 days.

Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, state minister for shipping, made the announcement after a meeting with senior officials from the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) to discuss the recommendations of an enquiry committee formed after previous incidents.

"We are embarrassed and saddened by the incident of [ferries] hitting the pillars of Padma bridge. This is a matter of concern for us. Hit on Padma bridge is tantamount to hit on our heart. We don't want our heart get hurt again and again," the state minister said.

Only cars, minibuses, ambulances and other lighter vehicles will be carried across the river via this route.

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VACCINE IP RIGHTS Its waiver will help global herd immunity

Say Prof Yunus, 5 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A temporary waiver of intellectual property rights for Covid-19 vaccines is vital to increase supply, achieve global herd immunity, and advance global health equity, Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus and five others have said in an article published in the BMJ (formerly British Medical Journal).

By late June 2021, 46 percent of people in high-income countries had received at least one dose of the Covid-19 vaccine compared with 20 percent in middle-income countries and only 0.9 percent in low-income countries, said the article.

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Messi gets hero's welcome in Paris

REUTERS, Le Bourget

Six-time Ballon d'Or winner Lionel Messi received a hero's welcome after flying to France on Tuesday to join Paris Saint Germain (PSG) following his shock departure from Barcelona.

Wearing a T-shirt that read "This is Paris," Messi beamed and waved at scores of fans who had come to greet him at Le Bourget airport on the outskirts of the French capital after his flight from Barcelona.

Chanting "Messi, Messi, SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



Bangladesh Railway staffs washing train carriages as those would be in service from today after a long break due to the lockdown imposed by the government to curb the spread of coronavirus. The photo was taken at Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

ALTERNATIVE TO HIGH-FLOW CANNULA OxyJet: the long road to approval



MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

From the drawing board to the approval stamp, it's been a long exhilarating process for OxyJet. But it isn't over yet.

A type of CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) device, OxyJet can supply pure oxygen at the rate of up to 60 litres per minute without any electricity, and shows a similar clinical outcome as high-flow nasal cannula (HFNC) treatment.

On the upside, the whole set-up of OxyJet costs only Tk 20,000-25,000, whereas a high-flow nasal cannula costs Tk 4-5 lakh.

The idea began on the whiteboards of the biomedical engineering department of Buet last year and was led by Dr Taufiq Hasan, associate professor of the department.

Taufiq said, "My wife and many of my friends are doctors who shared horrific stories of deaths due to the shortage of high-flow oxygen supply. I spoke to doctors of several hospitals in Dhaka and learnt how Covid-19 patients were suffering due to a shortage of resources.

"We were previously involved with another research to SEE PAGE 2 COL 3