



POLITICAL CRISIS IN MALAYSIA Scandal-plagued party UMNO poised to win PM race SEE PAGE 6

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AL feud behind Barishal violence

At least 50 hurt, some of them bullet-hit, in Wednesday night's clashes on UNO office premises; AL men including city mayor sued



STAR REPORT

A political rivalry between two Awami League stalwarts in Barishal city triggered the violence on the premises of sadar UNO's office on Wednesday night, leaving at least 50 people injured.

The incident led to a conflict between the authorities of the city corporation and the local administration, according to several politicians in the district.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Munibur Rahman and police filed two cases over the incident, naming Barishal City Corporation (BCC) Mayor Semiat Sadiq Abdullah as the prime accused for instigating the violence. Local AL men were also accused in the cases.

The mayor, however, alleged that Ansar members opened fire on him upon the UNO's directive after he went to the spot to calm the situation. He was unharmed.

Several local politicians told this newspaper that there has been a longstanding rivalry between Semiat and Zaheed Farooque, state minister for water resources, over establishing supremacy in AL politics in Barishal city. SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

GOVT RECRUITMENT Age limit raised by 21 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Considering the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the age limit for entry into government jobs has been extended by 21 months from the current limit of 30 years.

The Ministry of Public Administration yesterday issued an order in this regard.

The letter stated that all government agencies that were unable to issue recruitment notices due to the Covid-19 pandemic are requested to accept applications till the end of this year from job seekers based on applicants' maximum age on Mar 25, 2020.

At present the age limit for entering government service is 30 years; 32 for freedom fighters' offspring. However, it will not be applicable for the jobs under BCS.

According to the order, if a job seeker was not 30 years old on March 25 last year would be eligible for upcoming government openings advertised till December this year.

As such, people seeking jobs in the public sector have, effectively, had the age limit raised by 21 months. SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



AUGUST 21 GRENADE ATTACK



FILE PHOTO

17 years on, the road to justice not over yet

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Final justice has yet to be delivered over the August 21, 2004 grenade attack on an Awami League rally on the capital's Bangabandhu Avenue, even almost three years after a trial court found 49 people guilty.

A Dhaka court on October 10, 2018 sentenced 19 people, including former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar to death. Nineteen others, BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman included, were given life imprisonment.

Another 11 people were handed different prison terms in the two cases. SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

WOUNDS UNHEALED not only physical

RASHIDUL HASAN

Last year, Md Selim and Mahbuba Parvin gave interviews to different media outlets to express their anguish and dismay over the delay in implementing the verdict over the August 21, 2004 grenade attack.

Selim, an Awami League activist who carried several hundred splinters in his body, died a few months back, Mahbuba said, while she is not doing well herself. "Carrying over 1,800 splinters in

different parts of my body, including my head and kidneys, my physical condition is deteriorating due to multiple complications caused by the attack," she told The Daily Star on Monday.

"I am 52. My memory is failing and I am losing my eyesight day by day. Recently, a new problem has arisen -- my ears bleed," went on Mahbuba, women affairs secretary of Awami Swachhchasebak League of Dhaka district (south). SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

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Holy Ashura today

BSS, Dhaka

The holy Ashura, commemorating the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hossain Ibn Ali (RA), a grandson of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), will be observed across the country today with due religious solemnity.

Today is the 10th day of the month of Muharram in Hijri calendar. Muslims across the world recall the sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hossain (RA) along with his family members and 72 followers, who embraced martyrdom in 680 AD. SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

HOLIDAY NOTICE

The Daily Star office will remain closed today on the occasion of Ashura. There will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow. However, our digital version will serve the readers 24/7.

Resistance against Taliban spreads

Several killed in flag-waving protests in Afghanistan; ex-VP, son of ex-warlord vow to battle on, seek US help; G7 calls for int'l 'shared mission' to limit crisis; airport chaos drags on

AGENCIES

Protests against the Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan have spread to more cities, including the capital Kabul, while the militant group called on the country's imams to urge unity at Friday prayers, the first since they seized control.

Several people were killed when the militants fired on a crowd in Asadabad in the eastern province of Kunar, a witness said. Another witness reported gunshots near a rally in Kabul, but they appeared to be Taliban firing into the air.

"Our flag, our identity," a crowd of men and women waving black, red and green national flags shouted in Kabul, a video posted on social media showed, on the day Afghanistan celebrates independence from British control in 1919.

Marchers chanted "God is greatest". At some protests elsewhere, media have reported people tearing down the white flag of the Taliban.

The Islamist movement conquered Afghanistan at lightning speed as foreign troops withdrew, surprising even its leaders and leaving them to fill power vacuums in many places.

"The Taliban doesn't control the whole territory of Afghanistan. There are reports of the situation in the Panjshir Valley where the resistance of Afghanistan's vice president Mr Saleh and Ahmad Massoud is concentrated."

RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SERGEI LAVROV

The Taliban urged unity ahead of Friday prayers and called on all imams in Kabul and the provinces to persuade people not to try to leave the country.

Since seizing Kabul on Sunday, the Taliban have presented a more moderate face, saying they want peace, will not take revenge against old enemies and will respect the rights of women within the framework of Islamic law.

During their previous rule from 1996-2001, they severely restricted women's rights, staged public executions and blew up ancient Buddhist statues.

In Asadabad, several people were killed during Friday prayers. SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

COVID-19 INOCULATION CAMPAIGN Alarm as vaccines found at pvt clinic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The recent incident of Covid-19 vaccines found in the black market raised questions about the grip the government has over its inoculation campaign. The issue came to the fore on Wednesday night when police arrested a man in the capital's Dakkhinkhan area in connection with selling and administering Moderna shots at a private clinic.

This comes at a time when over one crore people, who have registered for getting the vaccine, are waiting for their first dose.

The government has not permitted any private facility to administer Covid-19 vaccines. All eligible people are supposed to get the shots from designated government facilities for free.

The reported vaccine embezzlement and the subsequent availability of those in the black market came after various irregularities marred the special vaccination campaign between August 7 and 12.

Experts say these, however, small in number, are causes for serious concern and put the entire campaign into question.

"It's a small incident but the consequences are huge. The entire vaccine chain management system needs to be re-examined to find the loopholes. Monitoring and supervision should be strengthened from the national level to field level," Be-Nazir Ahmed, National Immunisation Technical Advisory Groups (NITAG), told The Daily Star yesterday.

Be-Nazir, also former director of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said a proper probe was needed. Mechanisms must be devised to prevent such incident since a huge number of people would be vaccinated in the coming days.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Hefajat chief Babunagari passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hefajat Amir Junayed Babunagari died after suffering a stroke around 11:00am yesterday in Hathazari, Chottogram. He was 68.

He had diabetes, lung conditions and other ailments associated with old age.

He was also the director of education at Chottogram's Darul Ulum Moinul Islam Madrasa, often considered the heartland of Hefajat-e-Islam.

He died around 11:00am. SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

WORLD MOSQUITO DAY TODAY

Lax monitoring led to surge in dengue cases

Experts for year-round surveillance, effective mechanism to keep the mosquito-borne disease in check

HELEMUL ALAM

The absence of an effective mechanism to check Aedes mosquitoes, including proper and timely surveillance by the city corporations, is mainly to blame for dengue cases spiralling in the capital and elsewhere in the country, experts say.

They say hospitals are dealing with an increasing number of dengue patients every day and it has put an additional burden on the country's healthcare system already stretched by the Covid pandemic.

At least 32 dengue cases were reported in January, when the population of the Aedes mosquito -- vector for the dengue virus -- tends to be low.

But it was only in June that the two city corporations in Dhaka started mosquito fogging in areas where hospitalised dengue patients lived. The city corporations took almost four months to swing into action after collecting patients' addresses from hospitals, the experts pointed out.

By that time, the number of dengue patients had already crossed the 250 mark,

shows data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The situation has only worsened since then.

"To fight dengue, year-round surveillance on Aedes mosquitoes is very important," Saifur Rahman, an entomologist at the Bangladesh National University, told The Daily Star.

He said had the authorities conducted an extensive fogging in and around the patients' houses in January, the dengue situation would have been much better now.

On Tuesday, the country reported 329 dengue cases, the highest daily count this year.

In 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, 270 dengue patients were admitted to hospitals across the country, shows DGHS data. Of them, 33 were admitted to hospitals outside Dhaka.

Another dengue patient died in those 24 hours, taking the official death toll to 31. All these patients died in July and August.

Till yesterday, the total number of dengue patients had already crossed the 250 mark, SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



Advertisement for Xpel mosquito repellent. Includes text: 'এমন সময়ে ডেঙ্গু থেকে বাঁচতে অধিক কার্যকর xpel', 'সংবাদপত্র বাড়াচ্ছে ডেঙ্গুও সেই সাথে বাড়াচ্ছে ডেঙ্গুও', 'ZERO MOSQUITO FORMULA', 'MAGIC FILTERING SYSTEM ENSURES 100% SAFETY FOR YOUR FAMILY'.