

Covid risk

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cites an association between serious Covid cases and physical inactivity. The study informs that being physically inactive increased the hospitalisation risk 2.26-fold in people aged 18 and above.

Physical activity, during the pandemic, can provide the immune system the required boost to fight the virus in the event one happens to contract it.

The World Health Organization believes all adults over the age of 18 should at least spend 150 minutes in moderate-intensity physical activity throughout the week. In practical terms, that is just a little over 20 minutes of stretching, a light run, a couple of sets of push-ups, or even yoga every day.

Alternatively, you can choose to spend 75 minutes per week doing high-intensity workouts. That will be 25 minutes of muscle workouts, fast cardio, and bodyweight training spread across three days of the week.

In addition to a boosted immune system, one will experience better mood while stuck at home during lockdowns or while working from home. With the recent trends in Covid-19 cases, it seems as good a time as any to work up a sweat.

Yahya discusses

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what you have told me it is obvious that you have given considerable thought to a solution of this problem."

Yahya replied, "I have, and you can stop worrying because I am not going to execute the man even though he is a traitor."

SHYAMNAGAR DEBACLE

Bangladeshi freedom fighters faced a major setback today as Pakistani troops attacked one of their hideouts at Shyamnagar in the Sundarbans forest area, killing 51 and capturing nine. The troops made a surprise attack with the assistance of local collaborators.

Those taken prisoner were reported, according to Radio Pakistan, to have said the camp had been commanded by a captain from the East Pakistan Rifles.

13 AWAMI MNAS ASKED TO ANSWER CHARGES

The Pakistani military junta today ordered the last 13 of the 79 disqualified Awami League members of the National Assembly (MNAs) to appear before the Martial Law Authorities to answer charges of criminal offences. Radio Pakistan said Martial Law Administrator Lt Gen Tikka Khan had directed the 13, including a woman member (Nurjahan Murshid), to appear before the authorities. If they failed to do so, they would be tried in absentia, added Radio Pakistan. *Shamsuddoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com*

NGO official

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charge of Rowangchhari Police Station.

Police are trying to arrest the accused, he said.

In the district's Ruma upazila, police arrested one Nurul Islam, 48, accused in a case filed over the rape of a Tripura girl.

Nurul, of Dighinala in Khagrachari, allegedly raped the girl on Monday afternoon, said Kazi Rakib Uddin, officer-in-charge of Ruma Police Station.

He was arrested after the child's mother filed the case on Wednesday with the police station, said the OC.

"The victim was sent to Bandarban Sadar Hospital for treatment," he added.

In Madhukhali upazila of Faridpur, police arrested a man on charge of raping a six-year-old girl around 11:00pm on Wednesday.

The arrestee Mohammad Sagor, 23, of Garakhola area, is a salesman of a clothing store in Madhukhali bazar.

According to the case statement, Sagor took the victim to his house and raped her.

Confirming the matter, Sohildul Islam, officer-in-charge of Madhukhali Police Station, said, Sagor was arrested from his residence.

The victim's father filed a case with Madhukhali Police Station yesterday morning.

The victim was undergoing treatment at Faridpur Bangubandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, added the OC.

In another development, a Panchagarh court yesterday sent a man to jail in connection with the case filed over the rape of a madrasa girl in Sadar upazila, said Court Inspector Anisur Rahman.

The accused Kamrul Hasan, 28, a truck driver by profession, raped the girl several times alluring her with fake promises of marriage, said Abdul Latif Mia, officer-in-charge of Panchagarh Police Station.

As she felt sick, family members brought her to a village doctor where they came to know that the girl became pregnant four months ago.

Then victim's father filed a case with the police station accusing the trucker on Wednesday afternoon, said the OC.

218 Rohingyas died or went missing at sea

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Sea since the region's "boat crisis" in 2015, according to the report of the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, released yesterday.

"This means that journeys were eight times deadlier in 2020 than those in 2019," according to the report titled "Left Adrift at Sea: Dangerous Journeys of Refugees Across the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea".

It also highlights that some two-third of those attempting these perilous voyages are women and children in contrast to earlier periods where most of those travelling were men.

UNHCR says these deadly journeys of the Rohingyas are not a new phenomenon. Over the past decade, thousands of Rohingya refugees have left by sea from Rakhine State in

Myanmar and from the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar.

"The roots of these dangerous journeys are found in Myanmar, where the Rohingya were stripped of their citizenship and denied basic rights."

Bangladesh hosts nearly a million Rohingyas, mostly those who fled a brutal military campaign in 2017. Back in Rakhine State, there are some 600,000 Rohingyas.

For the Rohingyas who found refuge in neighbouring countries, restrictions on movement, livelihoods and education are compelling factors to seek a future elsewhere in the region. Motivations are various, often overlapping, and also include aspirations of reuniting with family members, UN Refugee Agency said.

Korean firm to be tasked with toll collection

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Under the approved proposal, KEC was supposed to be appointed for the work following direct procurement method under a government-to-government arrangement.

Shamsul Arefin, additional secretary of the cabinet division, said the company collects tolls and maintains 4,112km of expressway and 1,329km of bridges in South Korea.

TOLL FOR EXPRESSWAY

The finance ministry in April this year approved a toll rate -- Tk 10 per km as base fare -- proposed by the Road Transport and Highways Division for the expressway.

As per the rate, a medium-sized truck would have to pay Tk 550 to use the 55km expressway, on top of the

toll to use the Padma Bridge.

The toll for a bus would be Tk 495 and for a car Tk 138, as per the toll rate.

The division wanted to start collecting tolls from vehicles using the expressway from July this year, but later stepped back from the decision as the necessary structures were not ready.

Currently, tolls are collected by Roads and Highways Department for use of three bridges on the route. Once the Korean firm starts collecting tolls for the entire expressway, the current toll collection will be discontinued.

Contacted, RHD's Chief Engineer Abdus Sabur said terms of reference will be shared with the Korean firm

They are at even greater risks of abuse by smugglers when making such journeys. Their ordeal was made worse because safe harbours to end their dangerous journey were nowhere to be found.

Since 2020, many refugees have been marooned for months on unseaworthy boats, falling prey to abuses by smugglers, becoming gravely ill through insufficient food and water, and enduring the harsh conditions at sea, it said.

These risks have been prolonged on the occasions where the regional states have "pushed back" boats to prevent disembarkation, UNHCR said.

UNHCR has called on all states in the region to search for and rescue refugees in distress at sea, and disembark them to a place of safety,

work towards a regional mechanism for predictable and equitable disembarkation and provide access to asylum procedures for those who disembark.

It also called on the states to work with UNHCR and support fellow countries in the region to implement dignified reception arrangements and provide protection and assistance to refugees who disembark, and address the root causes of refugee maritime movements.

UNHCR's Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Indrika Ratwate said, "For as long as states bordering the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal are reluctant to rescue and land those in distress at sea, that collective failure to act will have tragic and fatal consequences. We can and must do better."

which will then give financial and other proposals.

After negotiations, the proposal would be placed before the CCGP, he said, adding that the process is expected to be completed within three months.

Replying to a question, he said the Korean company has given a tentative estimate of Tk 425 crore for five years' service, but that is not final.

He said for the first time in the country, intelligent transport system (ITS) would be installed on the expressway under a separate project funded by Korea.

Once the technology is installed, the KEC will operate those, he added.

Using ITS, authorities will be able to learn news of any accident or other

incidents on the road immediately. It will allow the authorities to take quick action to prevent traffic disruption, an RHD official said.

However, the project for installing ITS is still at a preliminary level, another RHD official said.

Meanwhile, CCGP yesterday approved eight proposals involving several projects.

According to a proposal, National Development Engineers Ltd will construct Road Research and Training Centre of RHD and maintain it for three years at a cost of Tk 251.6 crore.

The centre will be established under the South Asian Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Road Connectivity Project 2 of RHD.

17 years on, the road to justice not over yet

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filed over the attack, considered one of the most sensational political crimes in the country's history, which left at least 24 people killed and 300 injured. Then opposition leader Sheikh Hasina narrowly escaped death.

Eighteen of the convicted accused, including Tarique Rahman, who is in London, are absconding and 31 are in jail.

Execution of the capital punishment remains pending as the High Court has not yet started hearing on the death references and appeals by the 19 death-row convicts. The HC accepted the appeals more than two and a half years ago.

Under the law, all death penalties by trial courts must be confirmed by the HC before their execution.

The long delay in the hearing

is partly due to the coronavirus pandemic that has forced the court to suspend much of the regular activities and to run virtually amid lockdowns, court sources said.

The compilation of documents -- trial proceedings, statements, evidence, orders and the verdict -- relating to the murder and explosives cases have reached the HC in August last year, clearing the way for the court to start the hearing.

The sources added 63 appeals had been filed by the convicts in connection with the cases and all of them are pending before the HC.

Last year, HC officials placed the relevant files before the chief justice for a decision. But he has yet to assign any High Court bench to start hearing the death references and the appeals, as the SC had to suspend regular

activities amid surge in coronavirus contamination, the sources also said.

Contacted on August 16, Law Minister Anisul Huq said the government had taken all necessary steps to prepare the paper books, which contain all the details of a trial, expeditiously for quick disposal of the cases.

"The paper books are ready now. The government will move an application before the High Court through the attorney general's office in the first week of September for fixing a date to start hearing of the death references and appeals in the cases," he told The Daily Star.

He said the culprits had carried out the attack to kill Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to frustrate the dream of building the "Sonar Bangla"

Condemned fugitive held 22 yrs after the killing

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Kazi Aref, were killed in a brushfire during a rally on Kalidaspur Government Primary School premises in Kushtia's Daulatpur.

The others killed were the then Kushtia district JSD president Lokman Hossain, general secretary Yakub Ali, local JSD leader Israel Hossain and Shamsur Mandal.

On August 30, 2004, a Kushtia court sentenced 10 people to death and 12 others to life imprisonment in the case.

On August 5, 2008, the High Court upheld the death sentence of nine of

them and acquitted 13 others.

On January 8, 2016, three death row convicts -- Safayat Hossain Habib, Anwar Hossain and Rashedul Islam Jhantu -- were executed at Jashore Central Jail.

All three were top members of the outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Laltu).

One of the death row convicts died in custody while some others are still on the run.

At the press conference, the Rab official said that although Raushan's hometown is Gangni of Meherpur, he used to tell everyone in Rajshahi that he was from Gazipur. He also

Tourist spots reopen after 5 months

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Two private airlines have also increased the number of flights to different tourist destinations, including Cox's Bazar.

On August 12, the government said all tourist spots, resorts and recreation centres would reopen from August 19 (yesterday).

In a notification, the cabinet division said they will be allowed to operate at half capacity while following health safety protocols.

Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh (TOAB), a platform of around 700 tour operators, said the

tourism sector has incurred a loss of Tk 20,000 crore last year due to the pandemic.

Several lakh people involved with this sector had been spending their days in a sorry state due to the closure of tourist spots for around 19 months, with a gap after the first lockdown last year.

TOAB President Md Rafeuzzaman yesterday told The Daily Star that without reopening inbound and outbound tourism, this sector won't be able to bounce back from the losses.

In Chattogram, many people, with friends and/or family, were

seen coming out of their homes and roaming around different tourist spots.

However, the turnout of visitors on the first day at different tourists' sites, including Foy's Lake Amusement Park, Swadhinata Complex, Chattogram Zoo, Patenga Sea Beach and Karnaphuli Park, was low due to rough weather.

During a visit to different spots, it was seen that visitors were not allowed to enter without face masks.

In Foy's Lake Concord Amusement Park, staffers were seen with disinfectant sprays at the entry point.

Dulal Karmakar, a visitor, went

to the park with his family. He said they were exhausted from spending months at home and came to the park for some refreshment.

Bishwajit Ghosh, deputy manager of Foy's Lake Concord Amusement Park said they are following the instructions and health safety guidelines issued by the government.

The Chattogram district administration strictly instructed the authorities of all tourist centres to allow visitors at half capacity. It also instructed them to strictly follow health rules and ensure face masks were used.

Lax monitoring led to surge in dengue cases

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reported dengue cases stood at 7,251, including 416 cases confirmed outside Dhaka, the data shows.

The mosquito-borne viral infection and Covid-19 present similar symptoms such as fever, headache and body ache, which makes diagnosis hard.

And most hospital beds, including those at the Intensive Care Units (ICUs), are occupied by Covid-19 patients, making it difficult for dengue patients to get hospital admissions, said experts.

Saifur went on to term the existing system for eradicating Aedes mosquitoes outdated.

Fogging, which is the government's preferred mode of controlling the Aedes mosquito population, is not good at nipping the nuisance in the bud, according to the entomologist, who did his PhD on medical entomology in Malaysia.

"It [fogging] is the last resort," he said, adding that the Insect Growth Regulators (IGRs) were very useful insecticides against mosquitoes.

The IGRs are insecticides that mimic hormones in young insects and can prevent reproduction, egg-hatching and moulting from one stage to the next.

"If we can use this kind of insecticides, we need not worry about the Aedes mosquito breeding like we are doing now."

Had those insecticides been available, people could have used them in places where water remained stagnant for a long time.

Saifur underscored the need for an integrated vector management unit, which is yet to be formed by the government.

Besides, he lamented that the two Dhaka city corporations lack entomologists, whose presence is crucial for monitoring the Aedes mosquitoes and advising anti-mosquito operations round the year.

The Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) has two entomologists, but the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) does not have a single one.

The entomologist's post in the DSCC has remained vacant since last year, said an official of its health department, preferring not to be named.

"Serovigilance is very important to know about the type of virus so that the authorities can take necessary measures accordingly," said Manzur Chowdhury, entomologist and former president of the Zoological Society of Bangladesh.

Serovigilance is a globally used and trusted standard that measures the levels of antibodies against a certain infection and decodes the percentage of the population previously exposed to the virus. It is typically used as an extensive tool to

see how far an infection has breached in a community.

The Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) has conducted serosurveillance in July and found serotype-3 active in Bangladesh this year like in 2019, when the country suffered its worst-ever dengue outbreak with more than one lakh dengue cases and 179 deaths.

The serotype-3 is the most dangerous variant among the four dengue serotypes, he said, adding that the IEDCR could have done it much earlier.

The two city corporations, however, beg to differ.

Contacted, Brig Gen Md Zobaidur Rahman, the chief health officer of DNCC, said they have increased the manpower and equipment to combat dengue after 2019.

An additional 540 workers were recruited after 2019 to take the workforce to about 1,000.

Apart from the anti-mosquito drive, the DNCC is working to build awareness among people since the beginning of the dengue season this year, Zobaidur said.

The insecticide DNCC is using is 100 percent effective in killing mosquitoes, he said, adding that they have tested it in three laboratories before using it.

"We examine every bit of the chemical to check its effectiveness."

Ripples

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was rocky. But data gathered by Nasa's Cassini spacecraft, which orbited the ringed planet for 13 years before intentionally plunging into its atmosphere in 2017, suggests a larger core than previously estimated.

Rather than solid rock, Saturn's core is likely what scientists refer to as "fuzzy," or a slushy mix of ice, rock and metallic fluids.

A study on the findings published Monday in the journal Nature Astronomy.

Oscillations occurring within Saturn's interior cause the planet to move, which creates ripples in the planet's stunning system of rings.

"Saturn is always quaking, but it's subtle," said Christopher Mankovich, lead study author and a postdoctoral scholar research associate in planetary science at the California Institute of Technology, in a statement.

"The planet's surface moves about a meter every one to two hours like a slowly rippling lake. Like a seismograph, the rings pick up the gravity disturbances, and the ring particles start to wiggle around."

The frequency of the gravitational ripples measured in the rings suggest that Saturn's deep interior is stable. When the planet was forming, its interior formed stable layers as heavy materials like rock and ice moved toward the planet's center and lighter materials rose above them.

"This is the first time we've been able to seismically probe the structure of a gas giant planet, and the results were pretty surprising," said Jim Fuller, study coauthor and assistant professor of theoretical astrophysics at Caltech, in a statement.

Hefajat chief

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12:30pm on the way to CSCR Hospital in the port city, said ANM Ahmedullah, former publicity secretary of Hefajat's Chattogram unit.

Resident Medical Officer Amzad Hossain said Babunagari had different old age complications.

Babunagari left behind his wife, a son, six daughters and a host of relatives and followers to mourn his death.

Babunagari was born in 1953 at Babunagari village of Fatikchhari, Chattogram.

He studied in reputed madrasas and when he was 20, enrolled in Jamia Uloom-ul-Islamia in Pakistan and studied there for four years.

He was the secretary general of Hefajat when the islamist organisation was formed in 2010.

But a rift between him and late Hefajat amir Shah Ahmad Shafi became well-known in recent years.

On 15 November, 2020, he was elected the new amir following Shafi's death.

Relatives and family members of Ahmad Shafi claimed that Babunagari and his aides caused Shafi's death by creating obstructions in ensuring his medical treatment.

A relative of Shafi even filed a case against Babunagari and several others.

The Police Bureau of Investigation in a probe report in April said Babunagari and 42 others were involved in "creating an atmosphere to accelerate" Shafi's death.

In November 2020, soon after the formation of Hefajat's 249-member central committee, the organisation hogged the headlines by strongly opposing the construction of Bangabandhu's sculpture in the capital.

Tension between the government and Hefajat over the issue eased after a series of meetings between the two sides.

On December 7, two sedition cases were filed with the Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Court against Babunagari.

On April 26, Babunagari dissolved the committee reportedly because of the government pressure that came after Hefajat activists' widespread violence that lasted several days in late March.

Babunagari was under tremendous stress after the arrest of several hundred Hefajat activists and leaders following the violence that left 17 dead.

Two cases were filed against him with the Hathazari Police Station on charges of his involvement in the violence.

Amid pressure from the government, a new committee of Hefajat was announced in June with Babunagari as the chief. But most of the Hefajat leaders involved in the violent activities and those involved in different political parties were dropped from the new committee.

In a bid to come to terms with the government, Babubagari sent several delegations to meet Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan and different intelligence agencies.

At one stage, Babunagari and top Hefajat leaders announced that students of any Qawmi madrasa will never get involved in anti-government activities and politics.

Babunagari will be buried at the graveyard of Darul Ulum Moinul Islam Madrasa, popularly known as the Hathazari madrasa, after a namaz-e-janaza, said Maulana Yahya, a senior teacher of the madrasa.

The home minister and leaders of different political parties expressed deep shock at his death.