

Purchase body cancels

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Yesterday, six proposals, including these two, were produced for approval before the CCGP and two other proposals before the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA).

The CCEA agreed in principle to cancel the implementation of the Matarbari-Banshkhali-Madunaghat 400kv Transmission Line project.

Finance Minister Kamal said, "The project will not be implemented under the Public Private Partnership [PPP] method as there is no need for that at the moment."

Shamsul Arefin said that the project could not be implemented within the stipulated timeframe under the PPP method.

"But it will be possible to provide

electricity there through another transmission line."

The project was supposed to ensure power evacuation for the SS Power Ltd I Power Plant at Banshkhali in Chattogram.

However, the CCEA approved another proposal in principle to procure some 40,000 solar home systems with the capacity of 100-watt peak and some 2,500 solar community system with the capacity of 320-watt peak from a local experienced firm under the Direct Procurement Method for three districts in the Chattogram Hill Tracts.

"If these solar home systems are set up there, then we believe it will be possible to ensure power coverage even in remote areas of the CHT," he added.

West divided over Aug 31

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flying out thousands of Afghans every day on hulking military transports, but it has become an increasingly difficult and desperate task.

Many Afghans fear a repeat of the brutal five-year Taliban regime that was toppled in 2001, and violent retribution for working with foreign militaries, Western missions and the previous US-backed government.

There are particular concerns for women, who were largely banned from education and employment and could only leave the house with a male chaperone during the group's rule in the 1990s.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday said the international community must maintain dialogue with the Taliban if it is to protect any progress made over the past 20 years.

"Our goal must be to preserve as much as possible what we have achieved," she said.

The Afghan capital's airport has been gripped by chaos as US-led troops try to maintain a secure perimeter for evacuation flights, surrounded by desperate Afghans.

Some have foreign passports, visas, or eligibility to travel, but most do not. At least eight people have died in the chaos.

"Does anyone ... ANYONE ... have a contact inside the airport," pleaded one American on a WhatsApp group set up to share information on how people can access the airport. "My guy worked for us 2010-15 and needs to get out with 5 of his family. This is real bad."

The Taliban have also been accused of blocking or slowing access for many trying to reach the airport,

although they denied the charge again late Tuesday.

'IT WILL NOT BE ENOUGH'

A Nato country diplomat in Kabul, who declined to be identified, said several international aid groups were desperate to get Afghan staff out and neighbouring countries should open their land borders to allow more people to leave.

"Iran, Pakistan and Tajikistan should be pulling out far more people using either air or land routes. It's vital air and land routes are used at a very fast pace," the diplomat told Reuters.

European nations have said they would not be able to airlift all at-risk Afghans before August 31.

"Even if (the evacuation) goes on... a few days longer, it will not be enough," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas told Bild TV.

A hard withdrawal deadline presents a further complication that may reduce the number of daily evacuations.

The United States deployed fresh troops for evacuations. That 6,000-plus contingent, as well as hundreds of US officials, 600 Afghan troops and the equipment, will have to be flown out, reports AFP.

KEY MINISTERIAL POSTS

Taliban have appointed senior veterans to the posts of finance minister and defence minister, two members of the group said, as it switches focus from a stunning military conquest to how to run a country in crisis.

The movement's unexpectedly swift victory has left it struggling to govern, and alongside established Taliban names at the top, it has turned to several lower-level administrators to keep Kabul running.

7th grader dies

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so we admitted her in the medicine ward."

After her death, the victim's family revealed that she was raped, he said, adding that she might have died of internal bleeding.

Speaking to The Daily Star, the mother said the suspect and his mother accompanied them to the hospital and forced her not to tell people what had happened.

In Tangail, Rab arrested a young man in connection with the rape of a seven-year-old girl with challenges.

The arrestee, Shafiqul Islam, 20, was an easy-bike driver in Sadar upazilla's Aolaitia village.

Lt Commander Abdullah Al Mamun of Rab-12's Crime Prevention Company-3 said Shafiqul forcefully took the child into a lemon orchard and raped her.

The girl's father lodged a complaint

with the local police station in this regard.

In Sirajganj's Ullapara upazila, a woman was gang-raped beside the Solop Rail Station when she and her husband were trying to catch a train on Sunday afternoon.

Officer-in-charge of Ullapara Police Station said the woman was made unconscious and taken when her husband went outside the station.

Later, the victim was rescued from the spot and admitted to Ullapara Hospital.

After recovering, the victim stated that she was made unconscious, taken from the station and raped in an orchard at night, the OC said quoting the victim.

The victim's husband filed a case accusing four to five unidentified people on Tuesday.

(Our Pabna and Tangail correspondents contributed to the report)

Special drive for 2nd shots

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ward level since August 8 after receiving the vaccines from China's Sinopharm.

Around 14,000 temporary vaccination centres were set up across the country to administer the first dose. Those who did not register online got vaccinated through on-spot registration.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), around 55 lakh people received their first dose during the campaign.

During the first special mass vaccination programme, there was an overwhelming response of the people and many had to go back without getting vaccinated due to a shortage of supply.

While, in many cases, there were allegations of mismanagement.

Against this backdrop, Health Minister Zahid Maleque on Monday had said that mass vaccination activities like a six-day special programme would no longer take place. Rather, the regular campaign will continue in accordance with the vaccine stock.

Prof ABM Khurshid Alam, however, yesterday said, "We have a plan to hold a similar special vaccination drive once we will have enough vaccine stocks. To run a special campaign, we need at least one crore doses."

In yesterday's meeting, there was also a decision to vaccinate the family members, aged 18 and above, of frontliners, he said.

Under the criteria, only sons, daughters, domestic helpers and drivers of frontliners will be vaccinated.

"We had announced it last month, but we had no definition. Now we will accept official lists from the organisations where the frontliners are working. The registration will be open for them once we will receive the list."

300 VENTILATORS DISTRIBUTED

Meanwhile, the DGHS yesterday distributed 300 ventilators, gifted by Bangladeshi expatriates living in USA and Canada, to different hospitals.

For this, it organised an event at Central Medical Stores Depot (CMSD) in Dhaka. Prof ABM Khurshid Alam chaired the event.

Prof ABM Abdullah, personal physician of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said they have so far received 562 portable ICU ventilators from the USA, donated by the immigrant Bangladeshis and several non-government organisations there.

He said they were in the middle of negotiations to get more medical devices. "Those will include ventilators and others."

Four physicians living in the United States, including nephrologist Prof Ziauddin Ahmed Sadeq, cardiologists Prof Masudul Hasan and Chowdhury Hafiz Ahsan, and former senior UN official Mahmud Us Shams Chowdhury, and Bangladeshi-Canadian physicist Dr Arifur Rahman coordinated the efforts to send the ventilators to Bangladesh.

DAILY COVID UPDATE

The country recorded 114 Covid-19 deaths in the past 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, according to a press release from the DGHS. This was the lowest number of deaths since June 30.

On June 29, the number was 112.

Meanwhile, 5,249 people tested positive for the virus in the same period of time.

With the latest count, the total number of Covid-19 deaths rose to 25,513 and the total cases to 14,72,964. Against 34,708 tests yesterday, the positivity rate was 15.12 percent.

Of yesterdays dead, 56 were male and 58 female.



People receive a third dose of the vaccine against the coronavirus disease at Belgrade Fair vaccination center in Belgrade, Serbia yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Protection starts fading within six months

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fall below 50% for older people and healthcare workers by the winter, Tim Spector, ZOE Ltd co-founder and principal investigator for the study, said.

"It's bringing into focus this need for some action. We can't just sit by and see the protectiveness slowly waning whilst cases are still high and the chance of infection still high as well," Spector told BBC television.

Britain and other European nations are planning for a Covid-19 vaccine booster campaign later this year after top vaccine advisers said it might be necessary to give third shots to the elderly and most vulnerable from September.

"This is a reminder that we cannot rely on vaccines alone to prevent the spread of Covid," said Simon Clarke, Associate Professor in Cellular Microbiology at the University of Reading, who was not involved in the study.

'SHOCKING DISPARITY'
A separate British public health study found last week that protection from either the Pfizer-BioNTech or the AstraZeneca vaccine against the now prevalent Delta variant of the coronavirus weakens within three months.

The Oxford University study found at the time that 90 days after a second shot of the Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccine, their efficacy in preventing infections had slipped to 75% and 61% respectively. That was down from

85% and 68%, respectively, seen two weeks after a second dose.

The US government is preparing to provide third booster doses starting in mid-September to Americans who had their initial course more than eight months ago.

The World Health Organization hit out on Tuesday at the "shocking disparity" in access to coronavirus vaccines, with only four countries in Africa able to meet their inoculation targets so far.

"Globally, 140 countries have vaccinated at least 10 percent of their populations," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told the opening of an online meeting of African health ministers.

"But in our continent, only four countries have been able to reach that target, owing to the shocking disparity in access to vaccines."

The WHO secretary-general said that "the vaccine crisis illustrates the fundamental weakness at the root of the pandemic: the lack of global solidarity and sharing."

The Economist Intelligence Unit's study, released yesterday, found that the slow rollout of coronavirus vaccines will cost the global economy \$2.3 trillion in lost output.

The study also said that emerging and developing economies, whose vaccine rollouts are far behind those of wealthier countries, will bear the brunt of those losses.

HOSPITALS BATTLE COVID

The coronavirus has killed at least

4,451,888 people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to an AFP compilation of official data yesterday.

Sydney's Covid-19 infections hit a daily record yesterday, putting parts of the health system under pressure, officials said, calling for vaccinations to be stepped up to stem the tide of hospital admissions.

Despite two months of lockdowns in Sydney, New South Wales (NSW) state reported 919 new cases amid a growing Delta variant outbreak, taking Australia's daily case numbers to a new pandemic high just below 1,000, reports Reuters.

New Zealand recorded 62 new cases yesterday, taking the total number of infections in the latest outbreak to 210 as the government scrambled to scale up vaccinations amid growing criticism.

Indonesia is taking its vaccination drive to the sea as the world's biggest archipelago nation ramps up a bid to inoculate its huge population.

The navy has deployed 60 boats and warships to scour thousands of kilometres of coastline in the hunt for unvaccinated fishermen, from westernmost Sumatra to holiday island Bali and remote Papua.

China reopened a key terminal at the world's third-busiest cargo port yesterday, after a shutdown to control the coronavirus caused backlogs through supply chains -- but disruptions at a major airport are now sending transport costs soaring.

No baby count in Cox's Bazar in 4yrs

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refugees, including babies born in the camps in the district, according to the Joint Response Plan of 2020.

But on the other hand, the host community waited to get the basic identify document required to prove Bangladeshi citizenship.

The ACAPS report did not list the unions where birth registration has not resumed.

But Palongkhali union of Ukhiya upazila is one such union. This is where Kutupalong, the world's largest refugee camp, is located, said local officials.

"Birth registration has remained suspended in our union for four years," said Md Gofuruddin Chowdhury, chairman of the local union parishad. "I have not been asked to resume the birth registrations yet."

Approximately, 50,000 Bangladeshi nationals reside in Palongkhali.

"The relevant law says that you can get a birth certificate from any union -- but the sad thing is that there is a different law in my union," lamented the chairman. "Locals are being deprived of their rights."

There is a logistical reason behind this too -- the union parishad administration is currently not able to use its building since it is being used for security purposes, said Gofuruddin.

"I cannot sit in my own office. I would have used my own house as an office, but it lies behind a checkpoint, so the people I serve cannot go there freely," said the chairman.

ACAPS's report stated, "The three-year suspension [of birth registration] has reportedly negatively affected the social cohesion between the host and the refugee communities."

Meanwhile, the citizens are being charged a late fee of Tk 500 for the "late registration" even though the birth registration was suspended for no fault of their own.

Nurul Islam Sikder, the union chairperson of Chakmarkul union in Ramu upazila, said it has only been two or three months since birth registration began in his union.

"The people suffered a lot and were very angry. The people could not get their children admitted to school, apply for scholarships and even faced problems while getting remarried," said Nurul.

But why had they only just begun the birth registration process when the High Court order was made in 2019?

"We started taking in applications when the office of the upazila nirbahi officer and the deputy commissioner asked us to," he said.

The resumption of birth registration, however, did not come without caveats. Multiple union parishad chairpersons from Cox's Bazar spoke about how the residents were being asked to provide multiple layers of additional documents to prove their residency, many of which they do not have.

The ACAPS report stated, "Before the suspension, applications were submitted to a registrar who knew all the residents in the area, and the reference process did not take long. When registration services resumed in 2020, new committees were formed under the registrar at the district and sub-district levels to help complete all birth registration applications."

For unions, the registrar is the UP chairman.

"Around 27 or 28 types of documents need to be provided for the registration," said Chowdhury of Palongkhali.

The parent's national identity and birth registration cards are also being required when registering the birth of a baby.

The daughter of Taher Mahmud, a 40-year-old NGO worker, was born 10 months ago, but he is yet to get a birth

registration certificate for her.

"I had applied when my daughter was 41 days old. I don't know when I will get it. They wanted my NID card, my wife's NID card, and our parents' birth certificates. I could not give them my parents' certificates," said Mahmud.

"In addition, my birth certificate is not digitised. I had to file an application to have mine digitised. Once mine is digitised, they will consider my daughter's application," said Taher.

By digitisation, he was talking about the Online Birth Registration System, which was launched in 2010.

Aziz Uddin, the UP chairman of Baharchhora union, said that if the parents do not have their birth registration, then their children cannot get it either.

Tipu Sultan, the upazila parishad chairperson of Jhilongia union, described what happens when the parents do not have all the relevant documentations. "I have to personally know them. If I know you I will be able to help you. If I don't know you I cannot help you."

The ACAPS report and the UP chairman interviewed said that with birth registrations largely been suspended for nearly four years, the relevant committees are facing a long backlog of applications.

"The birth registration process had restarted a few months ago but then was temporarily halted while the UNO was being changed. It will start again soon from next month," said Sultan. "There are at least 1,000 applications in the queue."

His union has 70,000 local residents.

Meanwhile, Aziz Uddin said that it would take six more months to just verify the number of applications they have to deal with, and require a further one to two years to completely streamline the system.

Protecting heart

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aerobic activity helps the body stay in shape, and is also beneficial for the heart. Moderate intensity aerobic activity like brisk walking for 30 minutes, or even a swim, can help boost our immunity. During the current pandemic, if outdoor walks or swimming seem like too much of a risk, brisk walking from one end of your house to the other can do the trick. It's all about consistently working up a sweat.

If you wish to take it up a notch, and have the capacity to set it up, strength training is a great option to consider. Freehand exercises and working out with weights can ensure a healthy heart. Research also shows that a good weekly combination of aerobic exercises and strength training may help raise HDL (good) cholesterol and lower LDL (bad) cholesterol.

First crewless

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its makers. Developed by chemical company Yara International, the Yara Birkeland was designed to reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides, which are toxic pollutants and greenhouse gases, and carbon dioxide, as well as moving freight away from roads to the sea.

The shipping industry currently accounts for between 2.5% and 3% of global greenhouse gases emissions, according to the International Maritime Organization.

Nearly all of Norway's electricity is generated by hydroelectric power, which is generally considered to have much lower carbon emissions than burning fossil fuels, although it still produces greenhouse gases.

First conceptualized in 2017, the ship was created in partnership with technology firm Kongsberg Maritime and shipbuilder Vard. Capable of carrying 103 containers and with a top speed of 13 knots, it will use a 7 MWh battery, with "about a thousand times the capacity of one electrical car," according to Jon Sletten, plant manager for Yara's factory in Porsgrunn, Norway.

He says it will be charged at the quayside "before sailing to container harbors along the coast and then back again, replacing 40,000 truck journeys a year."

As well as providing a greener option compared to conventional cargo ships, Sletten says being crewless means it will be more cost effective to operate.

Initially, loading and unloading the ship will require humans, but according to Sletten, all loading, discharging, and mooring operations, including berthing and unberthing the vessel, will also eventually operate using autonomous technology. That will involve developing autonomous cranes and straddle carriers -- vehicles that place containers onto ships.

The Yara Birkeland was originally slated to set sail last year, but the Covid-19 pandemic coupled with logistical challenges delayed its launch.

Kennedy calls

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slaughter that has ravaged East Bengal." **PAKISTAN'S COMMUNAL PROPAGANDA**

In its bid to hold by-elections for national and provincial assembly seats in East Pakistan the military junta of Pakistan intensified its propaganda war against India and the Hindu community. According to them, Hindus and Hindu India were responsible for the so-called secessionist movement in East Pakistan, and Awami League members and the Mukti Bahini were the agents of India. The mass killing in Bangladesh was stated to be the result of the plots committed by the Indian agents.

The Pakistani propaganda machinery was also presenting stories in such a way that one might believe that the military administration was running smoothly in Bangladesh. Running of long route train and bus services, distribution of relief, seeds, rations, fertiliser and sanction of funds for development projects were now regular features of the propaganda machinery.

WORLD PEACE COUNCIL TEAM VISITS REFUGEE CAMPS

A two-member delegation from the World Peace Council consisting of Herbert Apthek of America and Italian Mousa Carlo today visited Bangladeshi refugee camps in Assam and Meghalaya. They arrived in Shillong yesterday.

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

Court gives bail

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process and we will wait. We will try that all other arrested members are freed."

The violence took place after several employees of Barishal City Corporation went to remove banners in front of the office of the UNO in the city's C&B area on the night of August 18. The violence left around 50 people injured. Many of them were bullet-hit.

A total of four cases were filed over the incident.

One hundred and twenty-two people, including BCC Mayor Seraniat Sadiq Abdullah, were named as accused in one case. A Barishal court directed the PBI to investigate it.

The BCC defamed on August 22 that the local administration and the mayor reached an understanding on the matter, but neither side spoke on the matter publicly.