




Under the Babu Bazar bridge near Mitford hospital, face masks are sold at wholesale rates of Tk 800-1,000 per 1,000 masks. Retailers, from hawkers to storeowners, come here to buy the masks in bulk and sell them for Tk 2-5 each. However, though helpful, these thin-layered masks don't protect against Covid-19 virus effectively. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Dengue cases cross 10k mark



Death toll **42**

30 died in Aug so far, **12** in July

233 more hospitalised yesterday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dengue cases in the country have officially crossed the 10,000 mark after 233 new patients were hospitalised in the 24 hours till 8am yesterday.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), a total of 10,090 people have been hospitalised with the mosquito-borne disease within the first eight months of the current year.

Most of these cases came within this month, which has seen 7,432 diagnoses so far.

At least 2,286 patients were hospitalised in July, 272 in June, while 43 were infected in May, according to the DGHS.

This month has also seen 30 deaths, out of the total of 42 deaths this year,

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CONNED ON 'IMO'

Syndicates target expats' online communication app, embezzle tens of thousands daily

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

First, they collect an expatriate's number through the online communication app "imo". Next, they hack the target ID by sending an OTP (one-time password). They then spend a week observing conversations made from the ID.

Finally, they call relatives of the user from the ID and concoct various scenarios, such as accidents or illness, to embezzle large sums of money.

The Cyber and Special Crime Division of police's detective branch (DB) claimed to The Daily Star that they have detected organised syndicates behind such acts of fraudulence.

DB officials said each of the syndicates are suspected to have at least eight to 10 members. Several of such syndicates are located around Natore's Lalpur upazila. They are suspected to make Tk 20,000-30,000 in this way every day.

DB police came to know these details following the arrest of two members of a syndicate on Tuesday. The arrestees are Polash Ali (27) and Sabbir Hossain (29).

"The syndicate mainly targets expatriates in the Middle East who use the online application 'imo' to communicate with family members," Junaed Alam Sharker, additional deputy commissioner (ADC) of DB cyber and special crime division, told The Daily Star on Saturday.

"imo is preferred by expatriates due to its low data requirement, which helps calls go through even with slow internet connections," he said.

DB started investigating the issue and arrested the two after a case was filed with Paltan Police Station by Jakir Hossain, manager of an overseas recruitment agency.

According to the first information report (FIR), owner of the agency Abdul Jalil was in Saudi Arabia when Jakir got a call from his imo ID.

The caller identified himself as Jalil's nephew Saiful Islam and told Jakir that his uncle was in a Saudi hospital with heart disease.

Saiful also said Jalil's wife was in ICU after contracting Covid-19, while Jalil's mother was sick and receiving treatment in a Cumilla hospital.

The same call was made to several of Jalil's relatives, whose numbers were saved in the imo ID. Saiful asked for Tk 1 lakh for treatment from each of them.

In response, several people, including Jakir, sent around Tk 80,000 to two mobile financial account numbers provided by Saiful, reads the FIR.

Talking to The Daily Star, ADC Junaed said this type of fraudulence has become commonplace and asked expatriates to remain alert and not share OTPs or any other sensitive codes with strangers.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE SYNDICATES

ADC Junaed said the syndicates have several wings to execute the crime.

For example, one or two members are responsible for collecting expatriates' numbers, another member is tasked with hacking the ID, someone else is tasked with monitoring the user's activities, and finally, another is tasked with collecting the funds.

Of the two arrestees, Sabbir collected mobile numbers of the expatriates and passed them on to Palash.

Palash was responsible for hacking the imo ID and monitor the user's conversations, said investigators.

Authorities said members of these syndicates are highly skilled and tech savvy.

Arrestee Palash has a bachelor's in textile engineering with experience working in the RMG sector.

To identify whether an imo ID has been hacked, DB officials suggested users go to the app's "Settings" and click on "Manage Device" under the "Account & Security" option. If one is hacked, it will show all the devices being used to log into the account.

BNP continues its ill-efforts to destabilise country Says Quader

Bss, Dhaka

Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said BNP has continued its various ill-efforts to disrupt the existing stability of the country.

He came up with the remark while addressing a press conference on contemporary issues at his official residence in the capital.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said the government had earlier feared that a plot was being hatched to make the university campuses unstable.

He said when students and teachers are preparing to take educational activities forward coping with the loss caused by the ongoing pandemic, BNP is playing dirty politics to destabilise the campuses.

Mentioning that the BNP is the real monstrous force in the country's politics, Quader said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and AL have brought economic emancipation to the country's people while BNP brought the chain of dependency.

He said recently police went to Chandrima Uddyan to cooperate with BNP in holding its programme, but the BNP activists clashed with them, violating the law and order.

The ruling AL believes in holding peaceful programmes, while the government always cooperate with the authorities concerned to hold such events and it will continue to do so in the future, the AL general secretary said.

But, he said, the law enforcement agencies have to take action if elements of terrorism and anarchy are found in the programmes.

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Govt must take responsibility of their families

Says Fakhrul on people 'subjected to enforced disappearance'



PHOTO: STAR

UNB, Dhaka

BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said the government must take the responsibility of the families of those who were "subjected to enforced disappearance".

"Who will take the responsibility for the helplessness of these families? There are many people who have not been found for nine to 10 years. Over 500 of our leaders and workers, including Ilias Ali and Chowdhury Alam, remained missing for many years," he told a human-chain programme.

The BNP leader said the children of the victims of the enforced disappearance still wait for the return of their fathers.

"You've heard the cries of the victims' children. You (govt) say these (disappearances) do not happen here. If so, where did they go? It's your responsibility to trace them and return them back to their families one by one. You must do it. Otherwise, you'll be tried in people's court."

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Recognise the mothers, housewives who stood by freedom fighters

Speakers call for documenting their contributions at event commemorating Musleha Islam, who helped the 'Crack Platoon'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Recalling the contributions of mothers and housewives, whose courageous support gave freedom fighters lifeline during the country's Liberation War, eminent citizens yesterday said untold stories of such individuals should be brought to the fore to inspire the post-Liberation War generations.

Addressing a commemorative event marking Pakistan army's raid on the house of Musleha Islam, who gave shelter to many Crack Platoon members and stored their firearms and ammunition during 1971, the speakers said the country's independence might have not been achieved without the courage of numerous mothers like her.

The family of Musleha Islam and members of Crack Platoon, a group that conducted major guerrilla operations against the Pakistan army, organised the programme titled "50 Years of Pak Army Raid at Road 4 House 25 Dhanmondi" in the capital.

Musleha Islam passed away on August 5, 2021 at the age of 93.

Wife of late Farukul Islam, Musleha Islam was widowed at the age of 30. During the Liberation War, the mother of four turned her house into a hub for Crack Platoon activities and a sanctuary for freedom fighters.

Recalling her courage, Crack Platoon member and eminent cultural personality Nasiruddin Yousuff said

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Speakers at the event yesterday, marking 50 years of Pakistan army's raid on the house of Musleha Islam at Road 4, House 25 in Dhanmondi in the capital. Musleha sheltered many members of the famous "Crack Platoon" and stored their firearms and ammunition during 1971. At the programme, speakers called for bringing to the fore the untold stories of such mothers and housewives to inspire the post-Liberation War generations.

PHOTO: STAR

Musleha Islam supported freedom fighters not only by giving them shelter at her house but also arranging money by borrowing from relatives. She also cooked for them on numerous occasions and stitched quilts during winter.

Wasif Islam

Member of Crack Platoon and Musleha Islam's eldest son

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Stimulus packages introduced for its expansion: Nasrul

Bss, Dhaka

State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid yesterday said the government has taken various stimulus packages for expansion of renewable energy in the country.

"Rooftop solar and net metering system is getting popular day by day as a business model," he told British High Commissioner Robert Chatterton Dickson in a virtual meeting with the envoy.

Nasul Hamid said solar home system has been providing electricity to around two-crore people in off-grid areas across the country due to incentives.

He said the initial cost and storage of renewable energy system is a huge challenge.

"A huge amount of land is needed for solar power. We have completed wind mapping but more researches on wind and ocean power are required. In this regard, technical, economic and experience exchange is essential," the state minister added.

He said initiatives have been taken to import hydropower from Nepal and Bhutan.

During the meeting, the state minister also discussed Bangladesh's energy transition, its possibilities and power system master plan review.

Besides, Bangladesh's planning, climate and environmental protection with the Energy Transition Council were also discussed at the virtual meeting.

The high commissioner highlighted the importance of net zero emission by 2050.

During the meeting, team leader on climate change and environment of British High Commission John Warburton and director (dev) Judith Herbertson also participated.

Sundarbans set to reopen for tourists Sept 1

UNB, Dhaka

After nearly five months of closure due to the Covid restrictions, the Forest Department is reopening the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest and a Unesco World Heritage Site, for tourists from tomorrow.

The decision was taken at a meeting between the Forest Department and the Tour Operators Association of Sundarbans, Khulna, on Sunday, said M Nazmul Azam David, the general secretary of the association.

However, it won't be business as usual as the Forest Department has given some rules and conditions before reopening the forest for tourists.

Mihir Kumar Do, forest conservator, Khulna region, said the Sundarbans will be opened to tourists from September 1 following the "Sundarbans Travel" policy approved by the cabinet.

"Each launch cannot carry more than 75 passengers. Social distance and hygiene must be

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