

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



3,436
New cases in 24hrs



15,07,116
Total cases



26,362
Deaths



14,37,885
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



4,550,576
Deaths



219,630,888
Total cases

DEFRAUDING PEOPLE GOING ABROAD

Four fraudsters held

They lured victims promising faster vaccination

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They used to target people travelling abroad and make promise of expediting their Covid-19 vaccination process. By doing so, they have deceived a good number of people.

The Rapid Action Battalion arrested four members of such a fraud gang from the capital's Mugda area on Wednesday.

"The main target of this gang was people travelling abroad. The gang was active in Mugda, Shahbagh, Ramna, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Mirpur, Mohakhali and other areas of the capital. They have so far deceived more than 200 people," said Commander Khandaker Al Moin, director of Rab's legal and media wing, at a press briefing yesterday.

The arrestees are: Nurul Huq, 47, Saiful Islam, 30, Imran Hossain, 23 and Dulal Mia, 37. They used to tell people that they will receive text messages for vaccination soon in exchange for Tk 2,500-5,000 each, Rab said.

The gang also tried to trap people through the social media and text messages. In the text, they said people, who had their registration done

earlier, will get texts in a day, and those who are new will get it within four days. They also assured them of giving vaccine doses to the applicants' districts.

"Some got the SMS normally or some were cheated," the Rab official said, adding that the gang has been involved in the scam since June.

According to Rab, Nurul is the gang leader. Arrestees -- Saiful and Imran -- waited in front of hospitals and they tempted people to give them money to get texts for vaccination fast.

Nurul used to bargain with the victims. If there was any problem over fixing the amount, they would be taken to Dulal. Depending on the amount, Dulal would tell victims when they would get texts for vaccination.

Rab said Nurul was an expatriate for long, but could not go abroad after he returned home in 2018 due to visa issues.

Imran was working at a travel agency. Saiful is a tea-seller in Ramna area. He was a cleaner at a government organisation. From there, he was fired on allegation of taking bribe. Dulal was a driver at a hospital, according to Rab.

Indian navy vessel delivers 2 mobile Oxygen generators

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

INS Savitri, an Indian Navy offshore patrol vessel, arrived in Chattogram yesterday to deliver two mobile oxygen plants (MOP) each with a capacity of generating 960 litres of oxygen per minute.

The MOPs developed and manufactured by DRDO in India will be donated to Bangladesh to support Bangladesh's effort to fight the pandemic, according to a statement of the Indian High Commission.

One of the plants will be set up at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital and the other at a Bangladesh Navy hospital BNS Patenga in Chattogram.

These fully equipped MOPs generate medical oxygen on-site in a highly cost-effective manner. These can also be used for refilling oxygen cylinders.

This visit by INS Savitri is the

second port call by Indian Navy vessels to Bangladesh in 2021 when Bangladesh and India are jointly commemorating the Golden Jubilee of the 1971 Liberation War.

In March 2021, two Indian Navy ships had made a historic maiden visit to Mongla to jointly celebrate Mujib Borsho.

As part of the Eastern Fleet of India, INS Savitri undertakes fleet support operations, coastal and offshore patrolling, ocean surveillance and monitoring of the sea lanes of communication.

While in Bangladesh, the ship's company would be interacting with their Bangladesh counterparts. On its journey out, Indian Navy and Bangladesh Navy ships will be engaging in Passage Exercise in the Bay of Bengal today.

Mask a must

FROM PAGE 1

The study findings were released on September 1 on the website of Innovations for Poverty Action.

Local NGOs GreenVoice and Innovations for Poverty Action Bangladesh were partners in the study.

"Wearing masks properly reduces symptomatic infection rate by 34 percent among the most vulnerable group, aged 60 and above," Ahmed Mushfiq Mobarak, lead author of the study, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He added that this was the largest study of its kind anywhere in the world.

Bangladesh-born Mobarak, a professor of economics at Yale, said the study was conducted in two phases: in phase I, the researchers wanted to see how to make people aware of the benefits of wearing masks consistently and in phase II, they sought to see if the intervention reduced Covid-19 transmission.

The researchers distributed free surgical masks, informed people about the importance of face-coverings, reminded people to wear masks when they were found unmasked, and engaged community leaders to persuade people to wear masks continuously in the areas they intervened in and termed them "treatment areas".

Then there were "control areas" where the researchers did not intervene.

"We found that use of masks increased threefold in the treatment areas. In control areas, the rate of mask-wearing was 13 percent while it rose to 42 percent in the treatment areas," he said.

The study also separately examined the rate of mask-wearing inside mosques, markets, and places like tea stalls, entrance to restaurants, and the main roads.

It found a slight increase in physical distancing in public spaces in treatment areas.

The findings included that wearing a surgical face mask covering the mouth and nose is an effective way to cut the occurrence of Covid-19 in community settings.

The intervention led to a 9.3 percent drop in symptomatic Covid and an 11.9 percent drop in the prevalence of Covid-like symptoms.

"We found clear evidence that surgical masks are effective in reducing symptomatic seroprevalence of SARS-CoV-2 [coronavirus], while cloth masks clearly reduce symptoms, we cannot reject they have zero or only a small impact on symptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infections," the summary reads.

Seroprevalence provides estimates of antibody levels against infectious diseases and is considered the gold standard for measuring population immunity due to past infection or vaccination.

"Surgical masks have higher filtration efficiency, are cheaper, are consistently worn, and are better supported by our evidence as tools to reduce Covid-19," the study summary continues.

Wearing of masks by local leaders, mask distribution, and other promotional activities increase mask-wearing and physical distancing among people, leading to lower illness, particularly in older adults, it added.

Co-author of the study Alamgir Kabir told The Daily Star that the researchers found stronger support for the use of surgical masks than fabric masks to prevent Covid-19.

"If we launched the mass awareness campaign in the rural areas engaging local administration, political parties and religious people, the severe surge of Covid-19 in Bangladesh could have been averted," he said.

Kabir, also senior operation manager of Innovations for Poverty Action Bangladesh, said making people aware through a mass campaign could contain the spread of Covid-19.

Abul Bashar Mohammed Khurshid Alam, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services, said, "We have repeatedly said there is no alternative to wearing masks. We launched mass awareness campaigns and such campaigns will be intensified. Everyone must wear a mask, even if they are vaccinated."

Ukraine's Zelensky seeks Biden's support on Nato

AFP, Washington

President Joe Biden assured Ukraine's leader Volodymyr Zelensky on Wednesday that the United States opposes "Russian aggression" but he showed no sign of moving on requests to open Nato to the eastern European country.

"The United States remains firmly committed to Ukraine's sovereignty

and territorial integrity in the face of Russian aggression and our support for Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations," Biden told the Ukrainian president in the Oval Office.

Zelensky, who spent Tuesday at the Pentagon pressing for military assistance to combat Russia and Russian-backed separatists, is only the second European leader to get a White House meeting so far under Biden.



People marching on Moulvibazar Press Club premises protesting what they said are frequent attacks, intimidation and destruction of the farms of Garo and Khasia communities in Doluchhara and Bhelua areas in the name of an afforestation programme by the forest department.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

Newly wed gang raped in Habiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A group of young men raped a woman while she was on a boat trip with her husband in Habiganj's Lakhai Upazila. RAB has arrested one of the eight accused after a case was filed with the Habiganj Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-2 by her husband yesterday afternoon.

Judge Ziauddin Mahmud took cognizance of the case and directed the officer-in-charge of Lakhai Police Station to file an FIR within 24 hours.

The accused in the case are Musa Mia, 26, Mithu Mia, 21, Hridoy Mia,

22, Sujat Mia, 23, Jewel Mia, 25, Solaiman Rony, 22, Musa Mia, 20, and Shubh Mia, 19.

Even though one was arrested, RAB did not reveal his name.

The plaintiff's lawyer Hafizul Islam said the couple, who got married a month ago, went on a boat trip to a Haor next to their house on August 25.

The newlyweds, a friend of theirs and a boatman were on the boat when around eight men on another boat stopped them. They then beat up the husband and the friend, took the girl on their boat and raped her while videotaping the incident.

The men threatened the victim and her husband by saying they would leak the video if they told anyone about the rape, which is why they kept the matter hidden for so long, the lawyer said.

The husband said, "Four days after the incident, they demanded money from me saying they would leak the video otherwise. As we could not pay, they already spread the video to some people in our area."

Meanwhile, since the incident, the victim's health has been deteriorating. She was admitted to hospital in Wednesday, he added.

Schools, colleges to reopen soon

FROM PAGE 1

able to contain the Covid situation to a great extent. "I have already directed the authorities to reopen the schools and colleges soon and measures were being taken in this regard," she said.

The PM made the comment participating in a discussion on an obituary reference placed in the House to express grief at the demise of Hasibur Rahman Swapon, who was the ruling Awami League lawmaker in Sirajganj-6.

Hasina, president of the AL, said teachers had already been given the Covid-19 vaccine while the authorities took measures to inoculate school students against the virus in line with the protocols of the World Health Organization.

"There are some WHO guidelines on vaccinating school students, we're following them," she said.

She also said the government was procuring Pfizer vaccines and would bring more of them. "The government is also trying to procure Moderna vaccines.... Other vaccines are also coming."

Since August 20, students aged 18 and above are allowed to register for the vaccination on the government's Surokha app. For others, the minimum age for the vaccination is 25.

According to data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), 14,19,291 students between 18 and 25 years registered for the vaccination till 8:30pm Wednesday. This is excluding the students of medical colleges.

Of them 2,25,097 received their first dose and 63,666 both the doses.

MEDICAL COLLEGES REOPEN ON SEP 13

Replying to a query, Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said the government was considering that it would vaccinate students below 18 with Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

Answering another question, he said in-person academic activities of first, second, and fifth year students of medical colleges would start from September 13. Those of other years would also resume soon, he said.

"Medical students have to go near patients. Otherwise, all their education will be incomplete. That is why we've decided to reopen in-person classes there," he told reporters after a meeting at the Secretariat.

He also said all teachers and students of the medical colleges had already been vaccinated.

There are around 1.5 lakh students in different medical and dental colleges and technical institutions across the country.

MEETING ON REOPENING

Secondary and Higher Education Secretary Mahbub Hossain told The Daily Star that they would take a decision on reopening schools and colleges jointly at the inter-ministerial meeting on Sunday and would inform all about it.

A top official of the education ministry said there was a strong possibility that the meeting would make a final decision on the reopening.

The official, wishing not to be named, also said schools and colleges are closed till September 11 as per the latest government announcement and

that the closure might not be extended this time.

On August 26, a joint meeting of the education ministries decided to seek advice on the matter from the National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19.

Sunday's meeting is taking place after taking advice from the committee, the official said.

The meeting on August 26 decided that all students of public and private universities would be vaccinated by September and in-person classes at the universities would begin on October 15.

On August 24, both Education Minister Dipu Moni and Primary and Mass Education State Minister Zakir Hossain said necessary preparations had been made for reopening schools and resuming in-person classes in phases.

Officials said students of class-III, IV and V might get to attend schools twice a week after the reopening and students of class-I and II once a week. Students of classes VI to IX will also go to their schools once a week. The number of the class days will be increased depending on the Covid situation.

According to education ministry officials, the schools will be reopened in phases. The ministry plans to start classes of SSC and HSC examinees for 2021 first. There is a possibility that they will attend in-person classes twice a week.

Last week, the authorities asked primary and secondary schools to ensure that their campuses are clean and ready for reopening.

Exec magistrates

FROM PAGE 1

issue of Razia's offering apology as she has submitted an explanation about her conduct to the additional district magistrate.

The court disposed of the petition submitted by lawyer Shishir Manir challenging the legality of Razia's action.

Earlier, on August 5, the HC bench asked the authorities to submit a copy of the explanation from Razia about her action to this court.

On August 1, Razia, who is also an assistant commissioner (land), conducted a mobile court and sentenced two 15-year-olds to one month's imprisonment for getting married, according to a report published in the daily Prothom Alo on Wednesday.

The executive magistrate conducted the mobile court at her office and ordered police to send the detained minors to the Child Development Centre in Gazipur, according to the newspaper report.

The HC bench included the letter as a writ petition in its hearing list on August 5. During the proceedings on August 5, SM Rezaul Karim, of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, took part in the hearing and told the HC that the executive magistrate's action to sentence any child is illegal and departmental action needs to be taken against Razia.

Good news

FROM PAGE 1

against a total of 33,025 tests countrywide. The previous day, the positivity rate was 10.11 percent.

Due to the spread of the Delta variant of coronavirus, both the Covid-19 deaths and cases reached the highest in July.

The record highest daily positivity rate was recorded 33 percent on July 24 while the highest ever single-day death -- 264 -- was recorded on August 5 and 10.

The caseload has been declining steadily from the beginning of August and the deaths from the second week of the same month.

Of yesterday's deceased, 44 were male and 42 were female.

Floods to prolong

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in 11 districts, including Kurigram, Gaibandha, Jamalpur, Bogura, Pabna, Sirajganj, Tangail, Manikganj, Rajbari, Faridpur and Shariatpur, will worsen as the water levels of the two rivers will increase today, said the ffwc bulletin issued yesterday.

However, the water level of the upper Meghna will decrease today, they added.

Out of 109 water-monitoring stations in the country, water levels of 68 stations are increasing while in 19 stations the water is flowing above danger level, the bulletin said.

Since the floods hit a week ago, people have been suffering from crises of food, drinking water and fodder for their cattle, as the local administration is yet to provide any support in most of the affected areas.

The water level of the Brahmaputra increased by 5cm and it was flowing 49cm above danger level (23m 70cm) at Chilmari point in Kurigram yesterday at 9:00am.

Fresh areas of the river basin spanning seven upazilas of Kurigram continue to be flooded as the water level keeps rising.

Milon Islam, chairman of Thanahat Union Parishad in Chilmari upazila, told The Daily Star that water from the Brahmaputra started flowing into new areas of the union since Wednesday night.

Soleiman Muni, 65, said he has been marooned for the past seven days, adding that he and others have been facing a crisis of food and drinking water.

"We are more worried about our cattle and poultry. Some of my poultry has even washed away. And as the grassland has been submerged, we are struggling to raise and feed our cattle."

In Tangail, the overall flood situation deteriorated as the Jamuna was flowing 57cm above the danger mark at Porabari point yesterday.

Waters on Jhenai, Dhaleswari, Bangsi and Louhajang were also flowing above the danger levels, said officials of Water Development Board.

Over one lakh people, who lived on riversides and in low-lying areas, have been suffering as six out of 12 upazilas in the district were flooded, district administration sources said.

Different crops, including transplanted aman paddies, on 920 hectares of land in eight upazilas of the district were inundated, officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension said.

Shahidul Islam of Bhuapur upazila said, "We are suffering immensely but we haven't gotten any support from anyone so far."

Asked, Dilip Kumar Saha, district relief and rehabilitation officer in Tangail, said 20 tonnes of rice were allocated for people at the four worst-affected upazilas till Wednesday. The local administration will distribute the rice among the listed victims.

In Manikganj, the water of all the internal rivers of the district, including Dhaleswari, Kaliganga, Ichhamati, Gazikhal, Kantaboti, is increasing.

At least 50 thousand people of Daulatpur, Shiblalay, Hariampur and other upazilas have been marooned.

Croplands, business establishments, schools and roads are at the risk of being engulfed by the Padma, Jamuna, Kaliganga, Dhaleswari as erosion has taken a serious turn in the upazilas.

(Our correspondents from Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Tangail and Manikganj contributed to the report.)