

Use Covid drug molnupiravir sensibly

Say experts at Eskayef seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Physicians should be judicious in prescribing molnupiravir, the first and only specific drug developed to treat Covid-19, as it is designed to treat only rt-PCR Covid positive patients, the country's leading medicine specialists said in a seminar yesterday.

Each Covid patient still needs to spend a lot of money for medication, which can be reduced if drugs are prescribed sensibly, they said at the event organised at a city hotel by Eskayef Pharmaceuticals Ltd, which brought "Monuvir", the generic version of the drug, to the market in the form of oral pills.

Prof Robed Amin, renowned medicine specialist and line director (non-communicable disease) at the health directorate, delivered a scientific presentation on the development and efficacy of the "game-changer" drug.

According to the specialist, molnupiravir has to be used early -- fewer than five days from the symptoms' onset. Ideal candidates are elderly patients, who have at least one health risk factor, suffering from mild to moderate symptoms of Covid-19 at home.

During the question-answer session, he said the medicine cannot be used to treat asymptomatic patients. Therefore, an rt-PCR positive result is required before prescribing the drug.

In the trials, the drug has shown great efficacy, as it reduced both hospital admissions and deaths by 50 percent



EXPERTS' TAKE ON MOLNUPIRAVIR

- Designed to treat only rt-PCR Covid positive patients
- Must be used fewer than 5 days from the symptoms' onset
- Ideal for elderly patients suffering from mild to moderate Covid symptoms at home
- Cannot be used to treat asymptomatic patients

among patients, he mentioned.

At the beginning of his presentation, Prof Amin congratulated Eskayef for making molnupiravir available in the market. "Although the Covid-19 situation is stable in the country, it may deteriorate at any time. In this context, we thank Eskayef."

In their remarks, five renowned physicians -- including Prof Khan Abul Kalam Azad, former principal of Dhaka

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THEY KNEW ALL ALONG

Instead of repairing damaged Tongi Bridge, authorities only kept it usable

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Tongi Bridge remained damaged for a quite long time, but authorities, instead of refurbishing the bridge, kept it only operational by putting steel sheets on it for the last two months, disregarding the risk of accidents.

They did this because they planned on tearing the bridge down, after opening a new 10-lane bridge within a few months, sources said.

On Wednesday, a five feet long and three feet wide slab of the bridge collapsed due to vehicular pressure, forcing authorities to halt traffic movement from that day. This caused huge tailbacks on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway for the last few days.

People have to suffer the tailbacks for another eight to 10 days, as authorities need time for repair work, which started yesterday.

There are two attached bridges over the Tongi canal: one was built more than 50 years ago, while another around 30 years ago.

The government is currently implementing a project, known as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) to develop a dedicated bus route from Dhaka airport to Gazipur corridor.

Under the project, Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA), one of the project's four implementing

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PHOTO: STAR



Despite knowing about the bridge's ramshackle condition, authorities have only started repair work yesterday, after a large slab collapsed. Meanwhile, many travellers have resorted to using trains after traffic movement on the bridge stopped, inset.

2.85 lakh fire incidents in two decades

Says fire service data

UNB, Dhaka

The number of fire incidents has increased four times over the last two decades, as the country's urban areas continue to expand without basic fire safety infrastructure.

According to data provided by the Fire Service and Civil Defence, around 285,000 fire hazards took place in the country between January 1, 1999 and December 31, 2020, causing an estimated financial loss of around Tk 6,900 crore.

Meanwhile, between 2004 and 2020, fire accidents killed at least 2,308 people, the data shows.

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- **2.85 lakh incidents of fire occurred between Jan 1, 1999 and Dec 31, 2020**
- **Estimated financial loss Tk 6,900cr**
- **2,308 killed in fires between 2004 and 2020**

REASONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
➤ Urban sprawl	➤ Mass awareness campaigns
➤ Violation of building construction	➤ Inspecting electric equipment regularly
➤ Non-enforcement of the law	➤ Enforcing building code
➤ Lack of awareness, supervision	➤ Proper fire safety measures
➤ Increased use of gas cylinders, electronic devices	➤ Collaboration between govt, private orgs

12 US senators express security concern over Rohingya camps

Write letter to foreign minister

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Twelve US Senators have written to Foreign Minister AK Momen expressing concern over the security status in the Rohingya camps at Cox's Bazar, especially after the killing of their leader Mohib Ullah.

"We are particularly concerned about the security environment given the broader feelings of insecurity that refugees, especially women, are expressing as a result of criminal and militant groups operating in the camps and recent fires," said the senators in their letter on November 5.

They urged the government to work in a transparent manner to bring the perpetrators behind Mohib Ullah's killing to justice, as well as redouble efforts to ensure that criminal groups cannot

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Six elephants killed in eight days

One 'electrocuted' in Cox's Bazar yesterday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The killing spree of Asian elephants continues.

Over the last eight days, six elephants were killed in shootings or electrocution across the country.

Meanwhile, another dead elephant was found buried under mud -- presumably killed by electrocution -- in Chakaria forest of Cox's Bazar yesterday.

The male elephant's body was recovered yesterday, as forest officials sent a team to conduct an autopsy.

The number of Asian elephants, categorised as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, is dwindling due to multiple threats across its ranges.

Rafiqul Islam Chowdhury, divisional forest officer of Wildlife and Nature Conservation Division, Chattogram, told The Daily Star that the elephant was killed by electrocution in the deep forest of Toitong in Chakaria upazila two days ago.

"On information, we recovered the body. An autopsy is underway. We have collected information about the perpetrators and will sue them after the autopsy report comes," he said.

'Act now to save elephants'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Residents of Sylhet city yesterday demanded punishment for the culprits involved in the recent elephant killings and authorities' stern action to protect the mammals.

They made the demand at a protest rally, held in front of Sylhet Central Saheed Minar in Chowhatta area, organised by Bangladesh Poribesh Adnolon's

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PHOTO: COLLECTED

Don't leave your documents on the floor!

Passport office cleaner, broker steal applicants' info and fleece them posing as cops

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Mofizul Hoque Tutul (47) is a cleaner and gardener, employed on a temporary basis at the Agargaon passport office.

A few years back, Tutul met Juwel Ahmed (27), a broker by profession, who would carry out different tasks outside the passport office.

They would get together frequently and consume narcotics, along with another friend, Hossain Emon (23). All of them live in Agargaon.

During one such session, the three came up with a plan to make some easy money.

As a part of the plan, Tutul -- who cleans the premise and makes photocopies of office documents -- would collect details of

a passport applicant when they came to the office for a new passport or renewal.

Sometimes, he would also take photographs of applicants' forms and hand over the details to Juwel and Emon.

The two would then call the applicants on their cell phones, posing as sub inspectors of police's special branch (SB), demanding money for "verifying information".

The Cyber and Special Crime Division of police's detective branch (DB) found out about the racket after arresting the three from the capital's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar area last Monday.

They also seized six cellphones, 11 SIM cards, and a huge number of copies of passport delivery slips.

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Five killed in road crashes

STAR REPORT

Five people -- including two school students -- were killed and 10 others injured in road accidents across three districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Lakshmipur, two school students were killed after falling from a motorcycle and getting crushed under the wheels of a truck in Sadar upazila.

Deceased Sanjida Akter was an eighth-grader at Lakshmipur Government Girls' School, while Fahmida Akhter was a class 10 student of Dhaka's Segunbagicha Girls' High School.

According to locals, Sanjida's father Arifur Rahman, who lives in the town, was on his way to their village home along with niece Fahmida on the motorcycle.

When they reached Palerhat on Lakshmipur-Ramganj road around 10am, both Sanjida and Fahmida fell off the bike and were run over by a truck, said eyewitnesses.

Agitated locals caught the driver and handed him over to police. They also blocked the road protesting the incident.

Contacted, Abdul Hannan, sub-inspector of Lakshmipur Sadar Police Station, said police rushed to the spot and

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ROW OVER FARE Driver, helper arrested for throwing man out of bus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police have arrested the driver and helper of a bus over kicking out a passenger from the vehicle in the port city's Tiger Pass Intersection on Friday night.

Police said arrested duo driver Md Hasan (29) and helper Md Ashraf (18), who ply their bus on the city's route-10, ejected passenger Abdul Hamid after an altercation broke out over charging extra fare.

Hamid had boarded the bus from Wasa Intersection to go to Tiger Pass, a journey of around one kilometre, on Friday night, said police quoting eye witnesses.

"Hamid wanted to pay Tk 5, as he planned to step out earlier, but the helper demanded Tk 8," said OC

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Those who have the eye for it are familiar with the pattern. Even though winter may tease its arrival from early late-autumn, it still takes a couple of cold showers to really get it going. Yesterday, as the capital was graced with several bouts of light rain, citizens were left wondering if this was the day that finally breaks through the last veneer of autumn. This photo was taken from Farmgate area.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

DIGITAL SECURITY ACT CASE Charges pressed against 'Shishu Bokta' Rafiqul

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Detectives have pressed charges against two people including Rafiqul Islam Madani, widely known as "Shishu Bokta", in a case filed with Motijheel Police Station under the Digital Security Act (DSA).

The other accused is Mahmudul Hasan Murtuza in the case.

Md Rezaul Karim, an inspector of Cyber and Special Crime Unit of Detective Branch of police and also the case's investigation officer, on November 6 submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka, an official of the general recording section at the CMM court told The Daily Star yesterday.

Madani is now in jail custody while Murtuza was arrested and later he was released on bail in the case.

In the charge sheet, the IO said the charges brought against them of making derogatory statements against the state were primarily proved and they should be brought under trial.

The IO dropped the names of Mohammad Amzad, HM Lokman Hossain and Tawhid Islam from the charges of the case as their involvement in the incident were not proved.

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JS goes into session today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliament will go into its 15th session this afternoon.

The session will be held at 4pm at the Parliament Complex at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

Considering the Covid-19 situation and public interest, journalists were requested to cover the parliament session through Sangsad TV's live telecast, parliament secretariat said in a press release on November 10.

President M Abdul Hamid on October 27 convened the parliament session, exercising the power bestowed upon him as per Clause (1) of Article 72 (1) of the Constitution, it added.

Before commencing the House proceedings on the day, the Parliamentary Business Advisory Committee is likely to hold a meeting with Speaker

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