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Digital transaction takes giant leap



Food crisis grips tea workers, families



Johnson's future uncertain after "party" apology



Ebadot saddened by Gibson's departure



COVID VACCINE

People suffer as chaos grips Mugda centre

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Hundreds of vaccine seekers, not enough space for social distancing, inadequate number of attendants to organise jab recipients and confusion about whether certain doses will be administered.

This was the state of Covid-19 vaccine administration at the vaccine centre in Nagar Matrisadan in the capital's Mugda

On the first day of fresh government restrictions to curb the spread of coronavirus and its highly transmissible Omicron variant, hundreds gathered at the centre to be vaccinated, enduring hardship as well as the risk of contracting

This correspondent spent about three hours in front of the centre from 9:00am and talked to at least 20 vaccine recipients about the management. After entering

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RUNNING AT HALF CAPACITY

Bus owners won't go by govt decision

Curbs mostly ignored on first day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A top transport association yesterday asked its members to operate their vehicles at full capacity, violating the government directive to carry only 50 percent passengers on public transports.

Dhaka Road Transport Owners' Association gave the instruction yesterday, saying the ministry concerned has "verbally" informed them that the government would allow public transport to operate at full capacity.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Khandaker Enayet Ullah, the association's general secretary who signed the letter said, "We came to know from BRTA about the decision [to allow full-capacity operation] verbally. So, we have asked our members to work accordingly.

On Monday, the Cabinet Division issued an 11-point directive, including one that says all public transport must operate at half capacity, to curb the recent rise in Covid-19 transmission.

On Wednesday, transport leaders at a meeting with Bangladesh Road Transport Authority demanded that the government change its decision and allow them to operate at full capacity.

However, on Wednesday, BRTA reiterated that from Saturday all public transport will have to run at half capacity.

Contacted vesterday, BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder said they have forwarded the transport association's demand to the road transport and bridges ministry and the Cabinet Division will take a final decision in this regard.

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Get jabbed immediately PM urges the unvaccinated

BSS, DHAKA

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday renewed her call to the unvaccinated people to get the Covid-19 jab immediately to protect their lives from the new Omicron variant.

"I urge those who are yet to get vaccinated to receive vaccines soon. We have started inoculating school students as well. At least life might be saved if one

FORCED DISAPPEARANCE Coerced by cops

Victims' families allege they're being forced to sign statements deflecting blame from police

ZYMA ISLAM

With the heat turned up on human rights violations in the country, police have re-established contact with families of enforced-disappearance victims.

Some of the families alleged that they were being harassed and coerced into signing pre-written statements saying they deliberately misled the police by concealing information.

They claim that the move was aimed at deflecting blame from the law enforcers.

According to human rights activists, families of most enforceddisappearance victims were not allowed to sue law enforcers even though there was enough circumstantial evidence suggesting their involvement.

Instead, the families were made to file general diaries (GDs) or mention in case statements that the victims went "missing" or "never returned" or "picked up by unidentified people"

On Monday, several officials from the Sabujbagh Police Station went to the house of Mahbub Hasan Sujon in the capital's Basabo area, his brother Jahid Khan told The Daily Star yesterday. Sujon, a Sabujbagh Thana-level Chhatra Dal leader, was picked

up by armed plainclothes men from Narayanganj's Sonargaon on December 8, 2013. "The officials came around 11:00pm on January 10. They

brought a written statement and started forcing my father to sign

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh continued to

extrajudicial killings with

Watch in its World Report

that all these incidents

happened while the ruling

Awami League government

addressing a pattern of grave

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made it clear in 2021 that

it had no intention of

abuses like these ones.

2022.

enforced disappearances and

impunity, said Human Rights

The report also mentioned

commit crimes such as

The security forces in

it. He didn't sign the statement Critics, journos after BNP leader Mirza Abbas intervened," Jahid said. The Daily Star has obtained muzzled: HRW

a copy of the statement, which says, "I made a general diary entry on December 11, 2013 after concealing information in it. I also provided misleading information about my son going

"This is my statement." When Sujon's father went to file a GD following the involuntary disappearance, he was not allowed to mention that armed men had whisked him away in a white microbus, said Jahid.

"We were only allowed to say that he is missing. If we did not do what we were told, they would not accept the

complaint." Kazi Farhad, a ward-level BNP

organiser in Sabujbagh, was picked up along with Sujon. A team from the Sabujbagh police also visited Farhad's sister and brother-in-law, with a similar statement to sign.

"I was instructed to write that I 'concealed information' when I filed a GD following my brother's disappearance," said his brother-in-law Saidur Rahman Dollar.

"I had to sign it because we are not 'influential' in our area," he said, adding that they were forced to hide the truth in the GD. At least 10 such families have been visited by police recently, according to Sanjida Tulee, who runs Mayer Daak, a platform for

families of enforced-disappearance victims. Tulee's brother Sajedul Islam Sumon was picked up in 2013 and has not returned yet.

These 10 cases were included in the United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance's (WGEID) list of 76 unresolved cases in this regard.

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N'GANJ CITY POLLS Focus on women, new voters

Ivy, Taimur make last-minute push as campaign ends at midnight

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA AND SANAD SAHA

With the Narayanganj city polls campaign ending at midnight tonight, major mayoral candidates Selina Hayat Ivy and Taimur Alam Khandakar are making last-minute efforts to woo women and first-time voters who may make the difference.

Many voters believe that Ivy, as the nominee of ruling party Awami League, may get an advantage over her rivals while independent candidate Taimur, also a BNP leader, may captialise on anti-government sentiments to win more

Voters said the turnout will be a key factor in the election. A total of 5,17,357 voters, including 2,57,519 women, are eligible to exercise their franchise in Sunday's polls.

The Election Commission will use electronic voting machines (EVMs) in all polling centres in the city.

Speaking to The Daily Star, several voters yesterday said the Osman family, a very influential political family in Narayanganj city, will also play a crucial role in deciding the fate of the two heavyweight mayoral contenders.

Manika Rani Saha, a homemaker, said, "We will vote for a candidate who will work for development of women. We want the city to remain safe like it is now."

Excited about casting ballots, some first-time voters said they will vote for the "fittest candidate". They said they want to see Narayanganj city as a humanitarian city where there will be no crime. They also want a pollution-free Shitalakkhya

Nighad Sultana Nishat, a university student and also a first-time voter, said she was yet to decide whom she would

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35 children hurt as helium cylinder explodes

6 in critical state; cause of blast in Cumilla not known yet



A doctor visiting one of the injured children at Cumilla Medical College Hospital last night. PHOTO: KHALID BIN NAZRUL

OUR CORRESPONDENT, CUMILLA

Thirty-five children were among some 40 injured when a helium cylinder, used to inflate balloons, exploded in Cumilla's Nangalkot upazila yesterday afternoon.

Six of the children were in critical state, said Dr Sajeda Khatun, deputy director of Cumilla Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

She said around 30 were brought to the hospital as of 12:15am today.

The other injured were admitted to Nangalkot Upazila Health Complex. Fazilatunnesa, a witness, said her neighbour Anwar was inflating and selling balloons near his house ahead of a fair set to start at Hasanpur today.

After Asr prayers, I heard a bang and found my daughter Habiba and 30-40 others injured."

Farukh Hossain, officer-in-charge of Nangalkot Police Station, said they were yet to ascertain the cause of the blast.

He said there was no permission for the fair amid the coronavirus pandemic and that a team may be formed to investigate the incident.

According to CMCH records, the

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