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ROHINGYA RETURN

Bangladesh unhappy with slow pace in verification

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has expressed dismay over Myanmar's slow pace verification of the Rohingya and offered the later all cooperation under three bilateral instruments to expeditiously complete the verification process.

The dismay was communicated at the first ever meeting of the newly formed technical level "Ad-Hoc Task Force for Verification of the Displaced Persons from Rakhine".

The authorities of Bangladesh and Myanmar held the meeting virtually yesterday.

Shah Rizwan Hayat, refugee relief and repatriation commissioner (RRRC), led Bangladesh side while Ye Tun Oo, deputy director general of the Ministry of Immigration and Population led Myanmar side.

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With no other place to sleep, some rickshaw-van pullers set up their vehicles with mosquito nets and polythene sheets as covers to spend the night. In a city so expensive, this is the best they could arrange for their shelter. The photo was taken yesterday morning in the capital's Shantinagar area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

PANAMA PAPERS

ACC submits report with Bangladeshi names to HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday submitted to the High Court a report containing the names of 61 Bangladeshi individuals and seven organisations mentioned in the Panama Papers as money launderers.

The report, however, contains no specific independent findings by the ACC about the Bangladeshis who have laundered and deposited huge amount of money abroad and to overseas banks, and purchased property.

The ACC cannot conduct an enquiry as it could not get detailed names and addresses, accurate information or relevant records of their investments in the offshore companies, the report said.

The ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan submitted the report in compliance with an HC directive issued on December 6.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman is scheduled to hold a hearing on the pending suo moto (voluntary) rule and a writ petition in this regard.

Contacted, Khurshid told The Daily Star that the ACC will need a long time to find the

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Embracing menopause with a POSITIVE ATTITUDE

STAR HEALTH DESK

Menopause a turbulent time for women. Hormone levels drop quickly, which causes period to slow to a stop, and some other symptoms set in. But one must consider that menopause is a natural part of life.

Menopause is the time when women are no longer able to get pregnant naturally as the ovaries permanently stop releasing an egg every month.

It usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, as a woman's estrogen levels decline. The median age of natural menopause is 51.

Menopause is recognised to have occurred after one year of no menses.

Most women experience menopausal symptoms. Some of these can be quite severe and have a significant impact on everyday activities.

Anxiety and depression are frequently observed

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Delhi eases curfew as Omicron wave slows

England lifts curbs; EU approves Pfizer Covid pill

AGENCIES

India's capital yesterday announced the end of a weekend curfew and eased other stringent coronavirus restrictions yesterday, with government data suggesting the country's recent Omicron variant outbreak had slowed.

Meanwhile, commuters trooped back to the office in England yesterday, with public transport visibly busier, after the government scrapped restrictions imposed to combat the Omicron variant.

The return to "Plan A" measures -- ditching legal requirements for face coverings and shelving vaccine passports -- comes as the number of positive Covid-19 cases has fallen sharply from record levels.

Infection rates are still high -- more than 100,000 confirmed cases were recorded on Wednesday -- but are plateauing, easing fears that health services will be overwhelmed.

In India, health authorities are still recording more than a quarter million cases across the country each day, but daily deaths have stayed a tiny fraction of those seen last year.

Local officials in New Delhi decided to reopen restaurants, allow markets to operate at full capacity and lift an all-weekend curfew imposed at the start of January that kept nearly all residents confined to their homes.

"In view of the decline in positive cases, it was decided to gradually ease restrictions while ensuring adherence to Covid appropriate behaviour," Delhi lieutenant

governor Anil Bajjal said.

India recorded more than 285,000 new cases overnight -- down substantially from the figures seen a week earlier -- and just 573 deaths.

"In the last five to seven days there is an early indication of Covid cases plateauing... but we need to observe and take precautions," health ministry official Lav Agarwal told a press conference yesterday.

An overnight curfew will remain in effect for all the capital's residents except essential workers.

"In view of the decline in positive cases, it was decided to gradually ease restrictions while ensuring adherence to Covid appropriate behaviour."

The coronavirus has killed at least 5,625,889 people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to an AFP tally compiled from official sources yesterday.

Meanwhile, the EU's drug watchdog yesterday approved Pfizer's coronavirus pill, making it the first oral antiviral treatment for the disease to be authorised in Europe.

Studies showed the drug called Paxlovid reduces hospitalisation and death in patients at risk of severe Covid, and may also be effective against the Omicron variant.

Subvariant can be more contagious Says Danish minister

REUTERS, Copenhagen

The BA.2 subvariant of the Omicron coronavirus variant, which is dominant in Denmark, appears more contagious than the more common BA.1 sub-lineage, Danish Health Minister Magnus Heunicke said in a national address.

"There is no evidence that the BA.2 variant causes more disease, but it must be more contagious," Heunicke told a news conference on W.

The BA.1 lineage currently accounts for 98% of all cases globally but in Denmark has been pushed aside by BA.2, which became the dominant strain in the second week of January.

The UK Health Security Agency has designated BA.2 a variant under investigation, saying it could have a growth advantage.

Preliminary calculations suggest BA.2 could be 1.5 times more infectious than BA.1, Denmark's top infectious disease authority, Statens Serum Institut (SSI), said in a note on Wednesday.

However, an initial analysis by the institute showed no difference in the risk of hospitalisation for BA.2 compared to BA.1.

LAND ACQUISITION

Dipu Moni trashes graft allegation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the allegation of corruption in the land acquisition for Chandpur Science and Technology University "untrue and fabricated", Education Minister Dipu Moni yesterday alleged that her political rivals were trying to tarnish her image ahead of the next parliamentary election.

Speaking at a press briefing at her official residence in the capital last evening, the minister requested the government agencies concerned to investigate whether any anomalies and corruption took place.

A report run by Bangla daily Prothom Alo yesterday said a section of influential people having close ties to the education minister abnormally inflated the price of the 62.5 acre land in Chandpur's Laxmipur union for setting up the university.

According to the local administration, the price of the land was hiked by Tk 359 crore from the actual price.

There is an allegation that those influential people are Dipu Moni's relatives and have close ties to her.

The education minister, also an Awami League lawmaker from Chandpur, yesterday said her brother Jawadur Rahim Wadud had bought land in Laxmipur union to set up a hospital and an old folks' home. The property also falls in the proposed area of the university.

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EC formation law won't save AL Says Mirza Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday said the law on Election Commission formation would not protect the ruling Awami League, and people would not accept the law.

"Earlier, the Awami League formed Baksal to save them and the same way they passed the Election Commission formation law this time. They thought it would save them, but they forgot that Baksal did not save them. They will not be protected even after enacting the Election Commission law," said party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Addressing a discussion at the Jatiya Press Club titled "Baksal: Black Day for Killing Democracy," the BNP leader raised a question about the motive of passing the law within a very short time.

He said the draft law was approved by the cabinet on January 17 and then it was placed in the parliament on January 23.

"Parliamentary standing committee was given a week to bring any change, if there is any, and then to bring it back in the parliament. But within 24 hours, they brought the law in the parliament and

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Three black storks on a Padma char near Rajshahi city. This migratory bird mainly visits the chars of the Padma and the Jamuna in the country's northern part in the winter.

PHOTO: ZAYED IMRAN CHOUDHURY SANIM

