



It's getting grimmer

Health minister says actual Covid caseload far higher than reported; experts for lockdown

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

The actual Covid-19 caseload in Bangladesh at present is most definitely higher than what is being reported officially, said Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday – highlighting the severity of the ongoing wave of coronavirus cases.

In the 24 hours to 8 am yesterday, the health directorate reported 12,183 fresh cases and 34 deaths from Covid-19, the highest since September 22 last year.

"I believe, the number of infected people is many times higher – we are roaming around carelessly and letting others get infected," he said at a press conference at the Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons in Dhaka.

- People aged 40 and above will get booster doses
- All children aged 12 and above will get jabs
- Covid patients must wait 6 weeks after recovery to get booster doses
- Those infected can re-join work after 10 days of isolation; no need for second test

He went on to blast those who are flocking to tourist destinations or social gatherings when Covid curbs are in place such as operating offices with half the staff.

Assuming that the symptoms would be mild if infected with the highly mutated Omicron variant, people are moving about nonchalantly and by not following the health guidelines, Maleque said.

"The perception is not right. If we take it lightly, the transmission will continue to rise."

The Omicron variant, which is driving the ongoing surge in cases after being detected on December 9 last year, has 70 times higher transmissibility than the Delta variant, the previous dominant variant.

"The Covid-19 situation is getting grimmer. Before the Omicron wave, there were only 400 to 500 patients in the hospitals, which has now crossed 2,500 to 3,000 and is increasing," Maleque added.

As of yesterday, the overall bed occupancy rate has increased to 17 percent from 5 percent on January 1, according to the Covid-19 Dynamic

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



A WINTRY EVENING ON A FOOTPATH ... A group of low-income people sit by the fire on a footpath on Bijoy Sarani in the capital as they try to stay warm. The photo was taken on Saturday night.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Back into darkness

Soon after surrender, many drug traders in B'baria running full-scale operation

MASUK HRIDOY and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Abdul Hoque was among the several hundred drug traders from Brahmanbaria who had surrendered to police during an anti-narcotics crackdown in 2017.

But within a year after his oath of returning to normal life, the 38-year-old was back to drug trafficking again like many of his accomplices due to poor monitoring and absence of any

effective awareness and rehabilitation programmes.

Acting as a buyer, this correspondent met Hoque on December 12 and wanted to buy two bottles of beer. At the time he had yaba and Phensedyl in his stock, but said he could also arrange beer.

Once a day labourer, Hoque got involved in narcotics smuggling in 2013. Within a few years, he was already facing 14 narcotics cases filed with Brahmanbaria police, according

to law enforcers.

On January 11 this year, Rapid Action Battalion arrested Hoque from Bijoy Nagar area with 95 bottles of Phensedyl and booked him over the recovery.

Hoque had surrendered to police with seven other associates in July 2017 after the government launched a "war" on drugs following a proliferation of illegal substances, mostly of cheap methamphetamine

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Sinha murder verdict today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Cox's Bazar court is set to deliver the verdict today in the sensational Maj Sinha murder case.

The accused include suspended officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station Pradeep Kumar Das, Baharchara investigation centre's police inspector Liaqat Ali, 10 policemen, and three of their aides.

They are being tried for the murder of Major (retd) Sinha Rashed Khan, who was killed in July 2020 as Teknaf police opened fire on Sinha at an APBn checkpoint on Marine Drive road.

The victim's family members



termed the incident a cold-blooded murder. District and Sessions Judge Mohammed

Ismail Hossain will be delivering the verdict.

Faridul Alam, public prosecutor at the court, told the media, "Major Sinha was killed by the accused in a planned manner and the prosecution has been able to prove it before the court beyond doubt."

He believed that the court would give the accused the highest punishment.

The accused also

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Two killed in Narsingdi post-polls violence

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Two men were killed and at least seven others were injured yesterday as local Awami League groups clashed in Raipura upazila of Narsingdi over Union Parishad polls.

The deceased are Mamun, 30, and Rubel Mia, 27, of Mirzarchar village.

Among the injured, Nurul Haque, 19, was admitted to Narsingdi District Sadar Hospital.

Locals said the clash that happened yesterday were over UP polls that took place two and half months ago.

Saheb Ali Pathan, additional superintendent of police in Narsingdi, said police forces were deployed in the area to prevent further violence.

4 crushed to death trying to rescue crash victims

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Driven by the humanity within, they had rushed to rescue the victims of a road accident nearby.

But in a dark twist of fate, they ended up losing their lives on the road as well.

Rokeya Begum, 60, Mostafa Sikdar, 58, Md Liton, 40 and Md Mofejul Islam, 40, of Madirpur's Shibchar upazila, along with other locals, ran to rescue passengers of a private car that collided head-on with a bus on the Bhanga-Dhaka Express Highway in the upazila's Badshamara area around 7:45pm on Saturday.

Just then, a Bhanga-bound Imad Paribahan bus ran over eight people, killing Rokeya and Mostafa on the spot.

Sakhawat Hossain, officer-in-charge of Shibchar Highway Police Station, said Khalil Matbar, 70, a passenger of the car

in the first accident was also killed.

He said the first one occurred when the Dhaka-bound private car, driven on wrong side of the road, collided head on with a Grameen Paribahan bus. While Khalil died on the spot, the two other passengers were critically injured.

At the sound of the crash, locals were rushing to the spot to rescue the injured, and as they were crossing the highway the Bhanga-bound bus ran over eight people.

Liton and Mofejul died on the way to Faridpur hospital around 11:45pm, while the others are receiving treatment, he said.

"Police seized the private car and Grameen Paribahan bus. The driver of the car is under treatment but the bus driver fled the spot. We are also trying to track the Imad Paribahan bus," the OC added.



আমরা গভীরভাবে শোকাহত

পপুলার জুট এক্সচেঞ্জ লিমিটেড ও তার সহযোগী প্রতিষ্ঠানের পরিচালক এবং প্রাক্তন ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক জনাব হাসান আহমেদ গত ২৪ জানুয়ারী ২০২২ মৃত্যুবরণ করেন (ইন্সলিডুয়াহি ওয়া ইন্সলা ইলাইহি রাজিউন)। এই অকাল, অস্বাভাবিক মৃত্যুতে তার মা, ভাই, বোন, আত্মীয়-স্বজন ও সকল কোম্পানীর কর্মকর্তা ও কর্মচারীবৃন্দ গভীরভাবে মর্মাহত ও শোকাহত।

মরহুম হাসান আহমেদ যে সুখ-শান্তি পৃথিবীতে পান নাই, মহান আল্লাহ তায়ালা তাকে বেহেশ্তবাসী করে, তার বিদেহী আত্মাকে এই শান্তি প্রদান করেন।



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