



The iconic Zia Hall near Shibbari intersection in Khulna city being demolished. The building that had an auditorium with a two-storey seating arrangement was the centre of cultural and political activities in the '90s. It remained out of service for almost a decade before it was sold to a local enterprise on auction. PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN



## Courage of the common people

ABDUL MATIN

Around 11:30am, (on February 21, 1952) police fired tear gas as students started coming out of the university in groups. Initially, we kept a list of those who were coming out as well as those who were arrested. But it was no longer possible after a while as students rushed out in large numbers.

In the morning, a part of the wall between the university and the medical college was demolished. While I and Oli Ahad were leaving Modhur Canteen, we heard shots being fired at the Medical College dormitory compound. The students were shouting through the microphone. We started running and as soon as we reached the medical, we saw the injured students being taken to the emergency room of the hospital.

I stayed at the emergency section of the hospital. Sitting on the lawn I began to cry. I started having doubts about the decision to break Section-144. At that time several university students came to me and said that a leaflet had to be distributed immediately. They added that another leaflet had been drafted, but the convener of the All-party State Language Action Committee, Kazi Golam Mahbub, refused to sign it. I took the draft leaflet from them and met Kazi Golam Mahbub. He was also at the emergency section at that time. He started blaming

SEE PAGE 10 COL 7



SUKANTA HALDAR and MOSTAFA YOUSUF

The Department of Environment has failed to comply with a High Court directive that asked it to stop the use of single-use plastic in hotels, motels, and restaurants of coastal areas in two years.

The HC had issued the directive in January 2020 in response to a writ petition filed by Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association in mid-2019. The DoE was asked to put an end to the use of such plastic by 2021.

The government department last year launched a three-year (2021-23) project to stop the use of single-use plastic in 12 coastal districts. It has so far held just one meeting with hotel, motel owners in Cox's Bazar.

The HC in its order had also asked the DoE to submit a compliance report to it by 2021, but the government body responsible for protection of the environment is yet to do so.

Abul Kashem, general secretary of Cox's Bazar Hotel,

SINGLE-USE PLASTIC

## Coastal areas still littered with them

DoE fails to comply with HC order to stop their use by 2021

Motel Owners Association, said the DoE held a meeting with them in Cox's Bazar last year. Officials at the meeting encouraged hotel, motel and restaurant owners to stop using single-use plastic.

"Since then, we have not seen any step by the department to contain single-use plastic," he added.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Razinara Begum, director (waste and chemical waste management) of DoE, said they in cooperation with World Bank prepared a roadmap to stop the use of single-use plastic in hotels, motels, and restaurants.

Asked about the reason for the delay in complying with the HC directive, she said, "We need time to make people aware of pollution and prepare them mentally to look for alternatives to single-use plastic."

Razinara said they identified coastal areas exposed to plastic pollution and held consultation meetings with different stakeholders.

"We can't stop its use overnight. We have to reach the goal of zero single-use plastic with cooperation from all," she added.

Single-use plastic includes single-use cups and plates, lollipop sticks, wrappers, sachets, extruded polystyrene, plastic cutlery, cigarette filters, cotton swabs, coffee stirrers, small water and juice bottles, plastic bags and multilayer plastic packaging.

Concerns are growing worldwide about plastic pollution, especially in oceans, where nearly half of the single-use plastic products end up, causing deaths to marine life. Plastic also enters the human food chain, multiple studies have found.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association, said she sees no reason why the delay in complying with the court order occurred.

"As the authorities are assisted

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## Daily Covid deaths on the rise again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The daily death toll from Covid-19 rose again yesterday as the health directorate reported 36 deaths in 24 hours till 8:00am, up from 30 the previous day.

On Wednesday, the figure was 36, the highest since September 22 last year.

With the latest count, the total number of Covid deaths in the country went up to 28,560, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

At least 8,359 people tested positive for Covid-19 in the same 24-hour period, raising the total number of confirmed cases to 18,53,1887.

The positivity rate stood at 23.83 percent after testing 35,074 samples countrywide.

The overall positivity rate is 14.61 percent.

At least 7,017 Covid patients have recovered during the 24 hours, taking the total number of recoveries to 15,94,391. The recovery rate is 86.04 percent.

Of the 36 deceased, 21 were males and 15 females.

Of them, one was aged between 21 and 30 years, two were between 31 and 40, two between 41 and 50, six between 51 and 60, and 25 were above 60 years, said a DGHS release.

Fueled by the Covid Omicron variant, the country started witnessing the third wave of the virus in the beginning of last month. The daily positivity rate hit 34 percent mark in the last week of January, the highest in the country so far.

However, Bangladesh is seeing a decline in the number of cases since early this month.

## Zoo, park animals dying from diseases

Says fisheries minister

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

SM Rezaul Karim, minister for fisheries and livestock, yesterday said the foreign animals in Bangladeshi safari parks and zoos are dying from infectious diseases.

He said this while talking to the journalists at the foundation laying ceremony of the Institute of Livestock Science and Technology in Sylhet.

About the recent animal deaths at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Safari Park in Gazipur, he said, "Bangladesh's climate and environment are unfamiliar to the foreign animals, which is why they are being infected by diseases."

"The zebras died of a disease. Lab reports showed that the other animals also died from similar ailments."

The minister added, "We are looking into whether there was any negligence on our part... Different ministries are working together to make sure no wildlife dies, and the environment and climate are not destroyed."

Rangpur Zoo's only tigress dies

On Friday night, the lone tigress of Rangpur Zoo died from old age, said zoo officials.

Ambar Ali Talukdar, deputy curator of Rangpur Zoo, confirmed the death yesterday afternoon.

The tigress, named Sawan, was brought to the zoo in 2010.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## Covid pandemic begins to ebb

Shows weekly data; cases drop by a 10th after rising for 15 weeks, deaths rise by 16pc

AFP, Paris

The Covid-19 pandemic started to ease around the world this week after a three-and-a-half-month rampage of ever-increasing infections, AFP data published yesterday showed.

The average number of global daily cases dropped by a tenth this week to 3.03 million, after increasing for 15 weeks in a row, according to an AFP tally to Thursday.

Almost every region of the world saw an improvement over the past seven days.

In the United States/Canada zone the number of new daily cases dropped by 38 percent, while Africa saw a 21 percent fall and Asia a 16 percent drop. Cases in the Latin America/Caribbean zone decreased by 13 percent and in the Middle East by four percent.

The situation was almost stable in Europe, with a one percent rise. Once a

catch-up in Australian figures is factored out, the number of infections in Oceania decreased by around a tenth.

Iran saw the biggest spike in the number of new cases this week with a 233 percent rise.

The Solomon Islands in the Pacific followed with 138 percent more cases, Armenia with 137 percent, neighbouring Azerbaijan was 133 percent up, while cases doubled in South Korea.

The Dominican Republic saw the biggest drop of the week with 65 percent fewer cases, followed by Nepal with 55 percent less, Argentina (down 51 percent), Jamaica (minus 50 percent) and Morocco (minus 49 percent).

The US remained by far the country with the highest number of new cases with 362,800 per day on average, which nevertheless was a drop of 39 percent on

SEE PAGE 10 COL 7



Transport workers have gotten into the habit of picking up passengers from the middle of the road instead of designated stops, not even making exceptions for the physically challenged. One such bus is seen picking up two blind men in the capital's Rampura. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS