

**Put your
mask back on
DGHS ADG tells people
as Covid cases spike**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With Covid cases rising every day, health officials have urged the people to wear a mask and take vaccines to keep the viral disease at bay.

The cases have gone up by around 308 percent on average in a week.

Yesterday, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) reported 232 new cases, up from 162 the previous day.

The daily positivity rate was 3.88 percent, the highest since February 27 when the figure was 4.01 percent.

No death was reported for the day.

Prof Ahmedul Kabir, additional director general (administration) of DGHS, yesterday said the country has not seen the end of Covid yet. "You saw the striking report yesterday... [Tuesday's positivity rate was] nearly four percent. We call it an epidemic when the rate goes over five percent."

Addressing a roundtable on the health budget at the DGHS headquarters, he said only taking vaccines cannot give people full protection against the novel coronavirus.

"Taking vaccines will give you the benefit that you will not need to be hospitalised. But you have to wear a face covering [to be safe from Covid]."

Ahmedul called upon the media to create awareness in this regard.

The virus has so far claimed 29,131 lives in the country.

The first Covid cases were reported in Bangladesh on March 8, 2020. Since then, more than 19.55 lakh confirmed cases have been reported as of yesterday.

In neighbouring India, Covid cases have also been on the rise.

In 24 hours, the country logged a total of 8,822 new cases and 15 deaths, reports the Times of India.

**Sri Lankan navy stops
Australia-bound
migrant boat**

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's navy said it stopped a fishing trawler transporting dozens of migrants to Australia yesterday, the fifth such attempt to be blocked in the last month.

The boat, crewed by five members, was detected near Trincomalee on the island nation's east coast with 50 men, 11 women and three children aboard as passengers, navy spokesman Indika de Silva told AFP.

"The boat had just left from somewhere along the Trincomalee coast when it was detected by a navy craft," he said.

"The suspects will be handed over to the police for further investigations."



Ukrainian servicemen fire with a French self-propelled 155 mm/52-calibre gun Caesar towards Russian positions at a front line in the eastern Ukrainian region of Donbas yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

**Nato-supplied arms
depot destroyed**

Claims Russia as Ukraine fights for Severodonetsk

AGENCIES

Russia said yesterday its forces destroyed a depot containing Nato-supplied arms in western Ukraine as Kyiv showed no signs of obeying a Russian ultimatum to surrender the eastern city of Severodonetsk.

"Near the town of Zolochiv in Lviv region, high-precision long-range Kalibr missiles destroyed an ammunition depot of foreign weapons transferred to Ukraine by Nato countries, including 155-mm M777 howitzers," the defence ministry said in a statement.

Ukraine said on Tuesday it had received just 10 percent of the weapons it requested from the West to deter Russia's military intervention.

Earlier yesterday, Russia's former president Dmitry Medvedev suggested that Ukraine may not exist in two years.

"I saw a report that Ukraine wants to receive LNG (liquefied natural gas) under a lend-lease agreement from its overseas masters with payment for delivery in two years," Medvedev, who is now deputy head of the Security Council, wrote on Telegram.

Plans announced by Moscow to open a humanitarian corridor for civilians holed-up in the plant were disrupted, Russian-backed separatists said, blaming shelling by Ukraine.

More than 500 civilians are trapped alongside soldiers inside the Azot chemical factory where Ukrainian forces have resisted weeks of Russian assaults.

In Kyiv, President Volodymyr Zelensky has appealed for heavy weapons from the West, criticising the "restrained behaviour" of some European leaders which he said had

"And who said that in two years Ukraine will even exist on the world map?" said the close ally of President Vladimir Putin.

Russian forces are currently concentrating their firepower on the strategically important industrial hub of Severodonetsk as part of efforts to capture a swathe of eastern Ukraine.

Moscow had told Ukrainian forces holed up in a chemical plant in the shattered city to stop "senseless resistance and lay down arms" from yesterday morning, pressing its advantage in the battle for control of eastern Ukraine.

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In Kyiv, President Volodymyr Zelensky has appealed for heavy weapons from the West, criticising the "restrained behaviour" of some European leaders which he said had

"slowed down arms supplies very much".

Nato defence ministers yesterday gathered in Brussels to discuss sending more heavy weapons to replenish Kyiv's dwindling stocks. At the meeting, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin urged allies not to "lose steam" on sending weapons to Ukraine, reports AFP.

Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg said the spike in global food prices was a direct consequence of the war, not of sanctions against Russia as Moscow claimed.

Meanwhile, Chinese President Xi Jinping yesterday told his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in a call that Beijing would keep backing Moscow on "sovereignty and security", according to state media.

The two leaders also agreed to ramp up economic cooperation in the face of "unlawful" Western sanctions, the Kremlin said.

The UN's Ukraine commission yesterday confirmed receiving multiple allegations of rights abuses by Russian forces, but said it was too early to say whether they constituted war crimes.

Dramatic win for Rifat

FROM PAGE 1

He said a phone call came when the results of 101 polling centres had been announced. "They [EC officials] then stopped declaring results for 45 minutes. I was ahead by 980 votes then. They took it by engineering."

He termed the Election Commission spineless, and said he would decide on his next course of action after talking to lawyers.

In his instant reaction, Rifat said he would release a "white paper" on corruption that took place in the city corporation in the past.

Regarding the election results, local Awami League MP Bahauddin Bahar, who is said to be backing Rifat, said, "We have won. It doesn't matter who accepts the result or who does not. Many councillor candidates will not accept the result."

He added, "Just watched a drama."

The third Cumilla City Corporation election was otherwise exceptionally quiet, calm and mostly uneventful. There has been no report of violence during the polling yesterday.

In recent years, almost all local government polls were tainted by clashes, allegations of ballot-box stuffing, use of muscle power, and other forms of election anomalies.

The turnout yesterday was 58.74 percent, Returning Officer Shahedunnabi Chowdhury said last night.

The voting process was, however, slow. Some voters alleged mismanagement by election officials in troubleshooting EVMs.

There was rain

interruption on an otherwise hot and humid day. It started to rain at 9:00am, just an hour after the voting began. When there was no rain, most polling stations saw voters queuing up.

Around 11:00am at Cumilla Modern School, one of these correspondents found hundreds of women waiting to cast their votes.

Some, mostly elderly people, became sick standing in line for hours. Some went home without voting.

Habiba Sulhana, of Thakurpara, said, "I have been standing here for an hour. And now, I am returning home. What kind of preparation has the government made that I couldn't cast my vote?"

People were seen splashing water on the heads of the elderly people to help them cool down.

Presiding Officer Mofizul Haque said there were 5,000 voters at the school. "It was raining since morning, so there was no pressure of voters. But after the rain stopped, a huge number of people started to come in."

These correspondents visited 25 centres and found that the pace picked up in the afternoon.

Rifat expressed satisfaction over the voting atmosphere.

Sakku alleged that EVMs slowed down the voting rate and in some centres the machines malfunctioned.

Lawmaker Bahauddin alleged that in some places people could not cast vote as they did not take voter slips with them.

Talking to voters it was found that elderly people had issues with fingerprints

while using the EVMs, which were used in all voting centres.

Glitches and people's inexperience in using the machine caused trouble polling at many centres, making voter lines outside grow longer.

One key feature of the polls was that female voters noticeably made up a significant portion of the crowds.

There were positive reactions from voters as well.

"I cast my vote without any hassle. The queue was long but the process was smooth," Bithi Begum, who cast her vote in Cumilla Collegiate School, said.

This time all the polling centres were under surveillance of CCTV cameras installed by the Election Commission.

Visiting polling centres, it was found that there were gatherings outside the polling stations, mostly by the supporters and activists of the ruling party wearing badges of "boat", the electoral symbol of AL.

Even the ruling party men were seen inside some polling centres.

The election has been much-talked in the political sphere as this is the first major task of the newly formed Election Commission that began its journey in February.

The last election to Cumilla City Corporation, formed in 2011, was held in March 2017. It saw Sakku winning a second term with the party support. But this time he ran as an independent candidate as his party BNP expelled him and also boycotted the polls.

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Talking to reporters after the election at the EC office in the capital, he also said on some occasions some elderly people faced some problems while casting votes using EVM and general appraisal was that voting through EVM was good.

He said that heavy rain caused some disruption and slowed down voting.

The previous survey in June last year found some 3,005.72km (1626.26 percent) of roads in "poor, bad or very bad" condition.

The latest was conducted between November 2021 and March this year.

According to the report, released on Tuesday on the RHD website, 20,072km (89.50 percent) of roads were surveyed this year, excluding those roads under rehabilitation or reconstruction work.

The survey found 1,128km of road (5.62 percent) in poor condition, 493km (2.46 percent) in bad condition and 457km (2.28 percent) in very bad condition.

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