

Six Covid patients die in 24 hours

Positivity rate dips to 11.89 percent

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health directorate reported six Covid-related deaths in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

At least 1,324 new Covid-19 cases were recorded during this period, said a Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) press release.

The total number of Covid-19 deaths in the country is 29,223 and the death rate stands at 1.47 percent.

The current positivity rate is 11.89 percent, down from 13.79 percent from the previous day. The overall positivity rate stands at 13.77 percent.

With the new infections, the total number of cases rose to 19,93,382, according to the DGHS.

A total of 11,131 samples were tested across the country during the 24-hour period.

At least 1,747 patients have recovered from Covid-19 within this time.

The total number of recoveries now stands at 19,19,166 and the overall recovery rate is 96.28 percent.

Of the six deceased, four were male and two were female.

They were between 21-80 years old, added the release.

Suspended APBn official charged for rape of minor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have submitted the charge sheet against a suspended constable of Armed Police Battalion, for raping a minor in December, last year.

According to the case, Shimul Ahmed, 27, raped the 13-year-old girl in the capital's Motijheel.

Court sources said Sujan Kumer Roy, a sub-inspector of Motijheel Police Station, submitted the charge sheet to Dhaka's Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court on Wednesday. The investigating officer said the charges brought against Shimul were primarily proved and he should be tried for committing rape.

Nine people were made witnesses in the charge sheet.

During the investigation, the victim gave judicial statement before the magistrate.

According to the case documents, the accused entered the girl's house around 9:30am on December 26 and raped her while her parents were away.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Children enjoying a nearly lost form of entertainment, a mini projector popularly known as bioscope, at an Eid fair in Mujgunni area of Khulna city.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Russian strikes kill 20 in central Ukraine

Zelensky urges 'special tribunal' for Moscow; US says war 'greatest challenge' to global economy

AFP, Kyiv

Russian missiles struck Vinnytsia in central Ukraine yesterday, killing at least 20 people including three children, in what President Volodymyr Zelensky called "an open act of terrorism".

The midday attack on the city hundreds of kilometres from the frontlines and invading Russian troops came as EU officials convened in The Hague to discuss war crimes in Ukraine.

The charred remains of upturned cars surround by burnt debris were seen in images distributed by officials next to a business gutted by a fire with brown smoke billowing nearby.

"There were eight rockets, two of which hit the centre of the city. Twenty people have died, including three children. There a large, large number of wounded," Zelensky said during an address European official at The Hague.

The Ukrainian leader led a moment of silence before urging European and International Criminal Court officials during an address to open a "special

tribunal" into Russia's invasion.

"I believe it is inevitable that International Criminal Court will bring accountability to those guilty of crimes under its jurisdiction: war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide."

The ICC in The Hague opened an investigation into possible war crimes in Ukraine just days after Moscow's forces invaded and it dispatched dozens of investigators to the country to gather evidence.

Russia invaded on February 24 and the conflict has seen thousands of people killed, destroyed cities and forced millions to flee their homes.

"Every day, Russia kills civilians, kills Ukrainian children, carries out missile attacks on the civilian facilities where there is no military target. What is this, if not an open act of terrorism?" Zelensky said after the Vinnytsia attack.

A Ukraine military spokesman said its forces had managed to knock out two from a barrage of cruise missiles that were launched from a Russian submarine in the Black Sea and caused widespread damage

in Vinnytsia.

Deadly strikes in central Ukraine have become relatively rare, but the war has raged around cities like Mykolaiv in the south which the presidency said was hit by a "massive missile strike".

"Two schools, transport infrastructure and a hotel were damaged," the presidency said in its morning military update early yesterday.

The heaviest fighting in Ukraine, however, has focused recently on the industrial Donbas region in the east.

Moscow-backed troops there yesterday said they were closing in on their next target, after wresting control of sister cities Lysychansk and Severodonetsk two weeks ago.

"Siversk is under our operational control, which means that the enemy can be hit by our aimed fire all over the area," a pro-Moscow rebel official, Daniil Bezsonov, was cited as saying by Russian state-run news agency TASS.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen yesterday said that Russia's war in Ukraine

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

4 women killed in boat capsized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Four women died after their boat capsized in Gungiajuri hoar of Habiganj's Bahubal upazila on Wednesday night.

The boat capsized while they were returning from a relative's home after inviting them to a wedding, Rakibul Islam Khan, OC of Bahubal police.

The dead were identified as mother of the bride Zarina Begum, 45, aunt Ledi Begum, 60, and two others – Ayatunnesa, 50, and Hur Banu, 55, – all residents of Shikarpur village in Habiganj Sadar upazila.

The boat capsized while they were coming back from a relative's home, Rakibul Islam Khan, OC of Bahubal police.

Four other people, including a child, were rescued alive by locals.

Police sent to jail for stealing gold

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A policeman and his accomplice were sent to jail yesterday on charges of stealing gold from a trader on Wednesday.

The accused are Md Babul Hossain, 35, assistant sub-inspector of Bhanga Police Station, and Mahedi Hasan Munshi, 25.

The gold trader, Pappu Biswas, filed a case with Bhanga Police Station the same day.

According to the FIR, when he was at Bhanga Bazaar after purchasing some gold, the two men stopped him and ASI Babul snatched his gold, saying it was "illegal".

When Pappu showed them his trade licence, Babul returned most of the gold but kept around 40 ounces and threatened him not to mention the incident to anyone.

Mild heat wave may continue in parts of country

BSS, Dhaka

The ongoing mild heat wave may continue till today morning in different parts the country, the Bangladesh Meteorological Department said in a bulletin valid for 24 hours from 9:00am yesterday.

It said the heat wave, currently sweeping over the Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions, and Dhaka, Tangail, Rangpur, Dinajpur and Nilphamari districts, may linger.

Rain and thunder showers with intense lightning flashes and temporary gusty or squally winds are likely to occur at few places in Dhaka, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Khulna, Barishal, Chattogram and Sylhet divisions, and at one or two places in Rajshahi division, with moderately heavy rain in some isolated places, the bulletin said.

However, the day and night temperatures across the country may remain nearly unchanged.

Dollar passes Tk 100-mark

FROM PAGE 1

"It's difficult to predict how the market will behave in the coming days. We don't know when the market will become stable as it is facing a shortage of the dollar," he said.

The BB has taken a number of measures to restore stability in the market but it will take time to reap benefits from the initiatives, he said.

Emranul Huq, managing director of Dhaka Bank, said some exporters didn't bring their export proceeds over the last few days due to the post Eid-hangover.

"...Besides, the central bank had earlier given deferral support to exporters to repay foreign loans because of the pandemic. Now the exporters are paying back the loans upon the expiry of the provision... This has created an extra pressure on the forex market."

He said the market might be under stress in the next couple of months owing to the global situation.

MORE MEASURES NEEDED

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director

of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, said the BB didn't take proper policy measures to tackle the ongoing instability.

"We have to contain the credit demand from the private sector at any cost, as the situation is worsening."

The BB should withdraw the interest rate cap on lending and hike the policy rate further to help reduce the supply of money to the market, he said.

The policy rate has been hiked twice within a month for the first time since it was introduced in 2003. The BB raised it by 25 basis points on May 29 and by 50 basis points on June 30 this year. The rate now stands at 5.50 percent.

The policy rate is a pivotal benchmark interest rate that commercial banks follow for fixing interest rates on both loans and deposits. A spike in policy rates makes loans more costly.

Ahsan also suggested that the government reduce subsidies in

fiscal 2022-23 to bring back stability in the macro economy.

"The suggestions are very painful, but the government should do it in the interest of the economy."

It's necessary to ease the pressure of balance of payments to shore up the foreign exchange reserves, he said.

Between July and May in the last fiscal year, imports went up by 39 percent year-on-year to \$75.40 billion, while exports grew 33 percent to \$44.58 billion.

This resulted in a record trade deficit – the gap between exports and imports – of \$30.81 billion, up 48.8 percent year-on-year.

The country's foreign exchange reserves yesterday stood at \$39.70 billion in contrast to \$46.15 billion in December last year.

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, advised that the BB should let the foreign exchange market run its own course.

If the central bank intervenes in

the market on a regular basis, the actual situation will not be visible, he said.

The reserves are now eroding, creating high exchange rate expectations among exporters. And many of them are now thinking that they will enjoy high exchange rates against the dollar if they bring the greenback later, he pointed out.

"This will worsen the ongoing crisis. Ensuring a floating exchange rate will help avert the situation," Zahid said, adding that the lending rate cap should be withdrawn as well.

BB'S STANCE

Contacted, BB Spokesperson Md Serajul Islam said the central bank is now making all-out efforts to keep the market stable.

It's now injecting dollars into the market on a regular basis, but banks should do more to address the issue, he said.

Banks should bring exports proceeds on time and take more initiatives to boost remittance, he added.

lawmaker," he said.

Omor held the press conference amid reports that he assaulted Salim on July 7 when several college principals went to his chamber to meet him.

The National University on Wednesday formed a committee to investigate the allegations.

Meanwhile, 24 eminent citizens expressed concerns over the alleged assault and demanded judicial investigation into it.

The signatories include Sultana Kamal, Rasheda K Chowdhury, Pankaj Bhattachariya, Ramendu Majumdar, Sarwar Ali, Rana Das Gupta, Fauzia Moslem, Khushi Kabir, Rokeya Kabir, MM Akash, Muhammad Zahangir, and Dipayan Khisa.

Philippines court

FROM PAGE 1

it was quickly withdrawn and laundered through casinos.

RCBC filed the defamation suit in March 2019.

In its defamation claim, RCBC said, "It is public knowledge that Bangladesh Bank has embarked on a massive ploy and scheme to extort money from plaintiff RCBC."

RCBC refuted BB's allegation that RCBC had played a premeditated role in the cyber theft.

An official of the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit said the defamation suit dismissed by the Philippines court will help BB's legal efforts to recover the stolen money.

'MP did not assault me'

FROM PAGE 1

argument and shoved each other. I got minor injuries from falling on furniture," he said.

Salim then repeated what Omor said the day before: It was the MP who stopped the fight.

Abdul Awal, principal of Matikata College, who also addressed the event, said he and Salim were arguing about something when "I couldn't take a word he uttered during the argument and pushed him and I am sorry for that".

When reporters asked Salim why he had a black eye and requested him to show his arms, he quickly removed his hands from the table.

"I received minor injuries during the chaos."

As reporters said they wanted to talk to Salim with no one else around, the MP said, "He is in trauma. He can't speak alone."

The lawmaker then asked his men to escort the principal to his chamber.

In his reaction to the event, Shafikur Rahman Badsha, president of Rajshahi unit of Bangladesh College Teachers' Association, said he was surprised by the principal's statement because "the principal himself told me that he was assaulted by the lawmaker... It is clear that he is doing this now fearing further humiliation.

"His statement served the lawmaker's interest... The statement appears to be written by the

Rajapaksa resigns by email

FROM PAGE 1

A handful of Sri Lankans were waiting in one of the airport's arrival areas to voice their anger at Rajapaksa and the economic crisis engulfing their homeland.

"I want to scold him with all the words that I know," said a Sri Lankan design engineer working in Singapore, who identified himself only as Max.

"He's responsible for everything that happened in our country," he told AFP.

Singaporean authorities were quick to warn against protests – it is illegal for even one person to stage a demonstration without prior official permission in the tightly-controlled territory.

Rajapaksa is expected to look to stay in the city-state for some time, according to Sri Lankan security sources, before potentially moving to the United Arab Emirates.

In Colombo, demonstrators left several of the emblematic state buildings they had overrun in recent days, after Wickremesinghe instructed security forces to restore order and declared a state of emergency.

"We are peacefully withdrawing from the Presidential Palace, the Presidential Secretariat and the Prime Minister's Office with immediate effect, but will continue our struggle," a spokeswoman for the protesters said.

Witnesses saw dozens of activists leave Wickremesinghe's office as armed police and security forces moved in.

Armoured personnel carriers patrolled parts of the capital, which had been put under a curfew.

Hundreds of thousands of people have visited the PM's compound since it was opened to the public, after he fled and his security guards backed down.

By yesterday afternoon, the gates were closed with armed guards

posted both inside and outside.

Earlier in the day, business owner Gihan Martyn, 49, accused the president of "playing for time".

"He's a coward," he said outside the president's palace. "He ruined our country... So we don't trust him at all. We need a new government."

Police said a soldier and a constable were injured in overnight clashes with protesters outside the national parliament as security forces beat back an attempt to storm the legislature.

Protesters also left the studios of the main state television station after breaking in on Wednesday.

The main hospital in Colombo said about 85 people were admitted with injuries on Wednesday, with one man suffocating to death after being tear-gassed at the premier's office.

The military and the police were issued with fresh orders yesterday to firmly put down any violence, and warned troublemakers they were "legitimately empowered to exercise their force".

Rajapaksa is accused of mismanaging the economy to a point where the country has run out of foreign exchange to finance even the most essential imports, leading to severe hardships for its 22 million people, with four out of five Sri Lankans skipping meals.

Sri Lanka defaulted on its \$51-billion foreign debt in April and is in talks with the IMF for a possible bailout.

The island has nearly exhausted its already scarce supplies of petrol with the government ordering the closure of non-essential offices and schools to reduce commuting and save fuel.

Diplomatic sources said Rajapaksa's attempts to secure a visa to the United States had been turned down because he had renounced his US citizenship in 2019 before running for president.