

‘Vaccines protect to a great extent’ Says DGHS chief, four more deaths recorded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Though vaccines cannot provide complete protection against the coronavirus, they do protect people to a great extent, Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of DGHS, said yesterday.

“As many as 70 percent of those who died during the fourth wave of the pandemic had not been vaccinated,” he said at an event in the capital.

He added that majority of those who have been recently infected do not require hospitalisation.

Meanwhile, the Directorate General of Health Services reported four Covid-19 deaths and 430 new cases in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday. Of the four dead, three were men.

With the latest count, the total number of deaths in the country rose to 29,266 and the total confirmed cases to 20,01,775.

So far, around 97 percent of all Covid-19 patients have recovered.

Pakistan High Commission removes ‘objectionable’ photo from FB

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Pakistan High Commission in Dhaka yesterday removed the photo combining the flags of Bangladesh and Pakistan used on its official Facebook page.

The removal came a day after the foreign ministry objected the way Pakistan High Commission used the national flags.

“I believe that there is no bad motive behind it... We hope Pakistan High Commission will withdraw it,” Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said at a press briefing in the ministry yesterday morning.

The Pakistan High Commission removed the photo of the flags from its Facebook after the media published the news of the minister’s statement.

On Friday, Bangladesh Freedom Fighters Platform protested the image in which the flags of the two countries were merged.



Eminent citizens, from left to right, Ali Imam Majumder, Serajul Islam Choudhury, Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Debapriya Bhattacharya, MA Martin, and Asif Ibrahim speaking at a discussion titled “Recent Communal Violence: Citizen’s Protest” at the Brac Centre Inn in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Over 1,000 migrants reach Italy in hours

Say NGOs, authorities; five bodies recovered

AFP, Rome

More than a thousand migrants arrived in Italy within a few hours while hundreds of others, rescued by humanitarian vessels, were waiting for a port to receive them, NGOs and authorities said yesterday.

The influx this year comes as Italy gears up for early elections which could bring the hard right to power.

Between January 1 and July 22, 34,000 people arrived in Italy by sea compared with 25,500 during the same period in 2021 and 10,900 in 2020, Italy’s interior ministry said.

More than 600 people attempting to cross the Mediterranean on board a drifting fishing vessel were rescued on Saturday by a merchant vessel and coastguards off Calabria, at the southern tip of Italy.

They were landed in several ports in Sicily.

The authorities also recovered five bodies of migrants who had died in so far undetermined circumstances.

On the island of Lampedusa, some 522 people from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, among others, arrived from the late hours of

Saturday in 15 different boats from Tunisia and Libya.

According to the Italian media, the island’s reception centre has been overwhelmed.

With a capacity of 250-300 people, it currently hosts 1,200, according to the



Ansa news agency.

According to La Sicilia daily, the latest arrivals on Lampedusa came both by ships carrying dozens, even hundreds of people, as well as by small inflatable boats.

Four Tunisians, including one woman, ran aground during the night on the beach of Cala Pisana after crossing the stretch of sea separating Tunisia and the Italian island, the daily said.

At the same time, it said that coastguards had intercepted a 13 metre (43-foot) ship which had departed from the northwestern Libyan city of Zawiya with 123 people from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt and Sudan on board.

Offshore NGOs continued to recover hundreds of migrants in distress in the Mediterranean.

SeaWatch reported that it had carried out four rescue operations on Saturday.

“On board SeaWatch3, we have 428 people, including women and children, a woman nine months pregnant and a patient with severe burns,” it said on its Twitter account.

OceanViking, operated by non-governmental organisation SOS Mediterranean, reported that it had recovered 87 people, including 57 unaccompanied minors, who were crammed onto “an overcrowded inflatable boat in distress in international waters off Libya”.

The Central Mediterranean migration route is the most dangerous in the world.

The International Organization for Migration estimates that 990 people have died and disappeared since the beginning of the year.

Man to walk gallows for killing wife

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

A Joypurhat court yesterday sentenced a man to death for killing his wife in Panchbibi upazila in 2002.

Additional District and Session Judge Golam Sarwar passed the order in presence of convict Nayan Mia, of Dampara village.

Nayan tortured his wife Reshma to death on November 10, 2002, said the prosecution.

Following a family feud, he started beating Reshma with a stick until she fainted. Then he kicked Reshma on her chest. She died on her way to hospital, the prosecution added.

Reshma’s brother filed a murder case against Nayan the same day.

They court delivered the judgment after testifying all the evidences and witnesses, said Nripendranath Mondal, the public prosecutor of the court.

Woman raped in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A woman was raped allegedly by four men in Chattogram’s Baizid-Foujdarhat Link Road area on Saturday night.

The victim went to the spot as the criminals lured her with a job at a readymade garment factory. Later, the men raped her, said police.

One Bappi was detained in this connection after the victim informed police about the incident on national emergency number 999.

The woman was admitted to the One Stop Crisis Centre at Chattogram Medical College Hospital for treatment, said police.

Sitakunda Police Station is dealing with the case and would take further legal actions within the shortest possible time, said Ashraful Karim, additional superintendent of police (Sitakunda circle).

Gatco case: Next hearing on Aug 31

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The defence for three accused yesterday completed placing submissions in support of discharging their clients from the charges of the Gatco graft case.

The accused are former Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) chairman air commodore Julfikar Ali, former CPA member AK Rashid Uddin Ahmed and former port director (transport) AM Sanowar Hossain.

During yesterday’s hearing, the lawyers told the court that the charges brought against their clients were false, fabricated and fictitious.

Meantime, Masud Ahmed Talukder, lawyer for Khaleda Zia, applied seeking an adjournment of the hearing on grounds that he was not prepared for taking part in the hearing.

Khaleda is now sick and has been receiving treatment at her Gulshan residence after she has been out of jail, following an executive order of the government, said her lawyers.

Advocate Masud yesterday represented her in the court in her absence.

Judge Muhammad Ali Hussain of Special Judge Court-3 of Dhaka then set August 31 for holding hearing from the defence lawyers on behalf of Khaleda and others.

Bike accident turned into extortion case

FROM PAGE 1

THE TWIST

After hitting Barek, the biker fled the scene, leaving the bike that he borrowed from another teenager. The Daily Star is withholding the biker’s name for legal reasons.

Subsequently, he told the bike owner, Nahidul Islam Nirob, 19, and some other friends about the accident. In the hope of getting back the bike, they contacted the victim’s family immediately, offering compensation. They also supported Barek with his treatment at two hospitals.

Nirob and four of his friends made an agreement with Bappi that they would come the following day (March 8) for final settlement regarding compensation for Barek and the return of the bike.

In the meantime, a man known as a Rab informant in the neighbourhood who happens to be an acquaintance of Bappi, told Bappi that he could use his influence to secure the compensation.

He also told Bappi, who lost his brother a year ago in a separate bike accident in the area, that he should teach these boys a lesson.

Everything changed after a Rab team raided the area as the bike owner and four of his friends went there for the settlement on March 8 evening, said Habibur Rahman Payel, one of the accused.

“As we were about to enter Barek’s house, some Rab members in plainclothes stormed the scene out of nowhere. We were rounded up and kept in Rab custody till late evening of March 9. Then we were handed over to Pallabi police,” he said.

None of them were allowed to contact their families, he claimed.

Bappi, who was also taken to the Rab 4 office along with the five accused, said he wanted to file a case over reckless driving.

“But the Rab members didn’t

want it that way,” he said.

He claimed when a Rab official drafted the case, he requested the official not to charge the boys with beating up his father.

After the drafting was over, the Rab official asked Bappi to sign it.

“They also recorded a complaint that said the gang members threatened us, and had me sign that too,” Bappi added.

Nakib Uddin Shikder, a local trader, and Montaj Ali, an embroidery worker, who were made witnesses in the case, were surprised to learn about the allegations made in the complaint.

“The case statement is completely false,” Nakib said, and then went on to describe how the accident took place near the mosque before Maghrib prayers, how locals took Barek to the hospital and how they seized the bike in the hope of getting compensation for the family.

“We know nothing about the extortion and assault,” Nakib said, adding that a day after the incident, a Rab team went to his shop near the scene of the accident and asked him to sign a document.

Montaj was not even present at the scene of the accident. And yet, Rab members allegedly forced him to sign a paper when he went to a mobile servicing shop near Barek’s house the next day.

“I told them I am illiterate and cannot read or write. So, Rab members wrote my name on a piece of paper and had me practise several times before making me sign their paper,” he alleged.

ABUSE OF POWER?

Former Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Haque expressed his disbelief at the findings of The Daily Star, and said, “If true, then it is a clear case of abuse of power.”

Noted rights activist Nur Khan questioned the very involvement of Rab in a case of an accident.

“Rab was not supposed to be involved in this matter. If needed, police could take action [against the biker]. It appears that Rab did this beyond the legal scope of its work,” he said.

The accused college students, Habibur Rahman Payel, Nahidul Islam Nirob, Proggyanur Rahman Mughdo, Saiful Islam, and Dewan MA Mahim, are now on bail.

Of the three boys accused, one is the son of Mohon Mia, the alleged victim of enforced disappearance, the other is Mohon’s cousin while the third is a resident of the neighbourhood.

One of the three was arrested by Rab one and a half month after the case was filed, and he has since been freed on bail. The other two boys have been living in fear of arrest.

Court sources said Bappi, the plaintiff, has submitted a deposition that he had no objection if the accused were discharged.

Asked about the three other accused, Payel, himself an accused, said he did not even know them and that he came to know about the three much later.

Zahirul Islam, who retired from a security force, denied that he was a Rab informant.

He said he was in the vicinity when Rab members raided the area.

“One of my former colleagues [in the security force] was in the Rab team and he invited me to their canteen. That’s why I went to the Rab office with Bappi,” he said.

Rab 4 Company Commander Superintendent of Police Joyita Shilpi, who led the drive, said they acted upon the complaint filed by the plaintiff. She also denied that Rab members drafted the case statement.

Asked about the three teenage boys’ inclusion in the case, she said she was only aware of five accused. “I do not know what happened later.”

Macron says Iran nuclear deal ‘still possible’

AFP, Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday told his Iranian counterpart Ebrahim Raisi that reviving the landmark 2015 deal on Tehran’s nuclear capabilities was “still possible” but must happen “as soon as possible”.

Macron also “expressed his disappointment” at the absence of progress after the suspension of talks in Vienna and underlined the need for Iran to return to the accord and implement its nuclear commitments, according to a French presidency statement.

The French leader’s telephone call with Raisi comes as negotiations in Vienna between Iran and world powers including the United States have stalled since March.

The 2015 deal aimed to prevent Iran from developing the capability to acquire an atomic bomb in exchange for lifting sanctions that have hobbled its economy.

But former president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the accord in 2018 and reimposed sanctions, leading Tehran to begin rolling back on its commitments.

In June, Qatar hosted indirect talks between the United States and Iran in a bid to restart the diplomatic efforts in Vienna, but discussions were interrupted after two days without a breakthrough.

The Iranian presidency said Raisi “condemned the unconstructive positions and actions of the United States and European countries” during his two-hour conversation with Macron on Saturday.

Last week, an Iranian official said Tehran had the technical capacity to make a nuclear bomb but clarified that it had not decided to make any.

The Iranian foreign ministry said there was “no change” in its nuclear policy, referring to an Islamic ruling that forbids “arms of mass destruction”.

Delhi reports India’s 4th monkeypox case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

A 34-year-old man in Delhi with no history of foreign travel has tested positive for monkeypox virus, making it the fourth case of the infection in India and the first in the national capital.

The man had attended a stag party recently in Manali in Himachal Pradesh, official sources said yesterday, adding that he was admitted to the Maulana Azad Medical College Hospital in New Delhi around three days ago after he showed symptoms of monkeypox.

His samples were sent to the

National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune on Saturday which came out positive, the sources said. “Contact tracing process has been initiated,” they said.

Three cases of monkeypox had earlier been reported from the southern state of Kerala.

A high-level review of the situation has been planned by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) yesterday evening.

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Saturday declared monkeypox as a global public health emergency of international concern.

general secretary of Jasod, said.

Awal, in response, said foreign diplomats had met with the EC but did not give any advice regarding elections.

“We have been saying from the beginning that we will continue to urge all parties to join the polls. But we cannot compel anyone.”

Jasod advised making EVMs flawless and credible for election, but also to have preparations for the use of ballot papers.

The party also called for the deployment of the armed forces under magistrates if needed.

Jasod and Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon both urged the commission to take measures to curb the huge amount of election expenditure.

Khelafat Andolon demanded the abolition of reserved women’s seats in parliament and cancelling a mandatory provision of keeping 33 percent positions in all committees of a party reserved for women.

The party also demanded that EVMs not be used and the presence of a “neutral government”.

Islamic Front Bangladesh said EC officials should be appointed as returning officers and holding the election over three days.