

US policy
advisor Laura
Stone in city

DIPLOMATIC
CORRESPONDENT

Senior
Policy
Adviser
of US
Administration
Laura
Stone, who is in the city on a two-day visit to Bangladesh, will be meeting State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam, Foreign Minister Secretary (West) Shabbir Ahmad and health ministry officials to discuss the future cooperation in the areas of health and pandemic.

Stone, who arrived in Dhaka last night, is a top official coordinating the US vaccine supplies across different countries. She will be sharing her experience and listening to the Bangladesh officials on the successes in tackling the pandemic and the challenges ahead.

The US has provided 68 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines and
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MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

When Seeam Ul Karim was born, he brought immense joy to his parents' life. However, within a few years, he was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), a neurological and developmental condition that changed the lives of Seeam and his parents.

Soon, he started developing symptoms of other associated disabilities – severe learning issues, reduced sensory and motor skills, beta-thalassemia, diabetes, and communication disorder.

When Seeam's father refused to support his son's treatment for his deteriorating conditions, the mother – Sajida Rahman Danny – took up the mantle of that responsibility.

And thus, began the mother's battle. Many schools rejected Seeam, and not only



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that, landlords refused to rent out their homes to Danny and Seeam.

"I was very young when my son was diagnosed. I neither got financial support from

my family nor my husband after our divorce." "But I could never give up on Seeam. I kept my faith in him," said Danny.

Facing these rejections and discriminatory attitudes towards her son, Danny was driven to launch a vocational training centre for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities called PFDA Vocational Training Center Trust in 2014.

Located at Mohakhali DOHS, this centre is currently teaching 200 children with ASD, cerebral palsy, down syndrome, and intellectual disability different vocational skills – like baking, sewing, painting, jewellery-making,

skills related to food and beverage services, shopkeeping, computer operation, and much more. They also participate in different types of co-curricular activities such as singing, dancing, theatre and sports.

Danny had to leave her job at Unicef and sell off her property to launch the centre. The centre started with only six children with neurodevelopmental disabilities.

"At that time, almost all my relatives discouraged me. I had a secure job with a good salary at that time, but I sacrificed it to establish the centre," said Danny.

"I thought there are many parents like me who are struggling to help their children, and I must do something for them," she added.

For Danny's efforts, Seeam has completed "AS" level under British Council and got a job at a duty-free shop at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. He can interact with customers just like any other skilled professional and speaks three languages fluently.

Seeam said, "I can now use public transport or use ride-sharing apps. I can cook for myself and do most household chores. In most cases, I don't need my mother's help anymore."

Ishaba Hafiz Sushmi, a girl with autism, also went through similar obstacles like Seeam. Overcoming stigma, she learned to sing, dance and act. At PFDA, she works in jewellery production.

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I've seen that all these children have tremendous potential and a drive to learn. We strive to recognise their talents and design teaching-learning methods according to their strengths and needs.

Sajida Rahman Danny

SC stays bail
of Regent's
Shahed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court chamber judge yesterday stayed, till October 24, a High Court verdict that granted bail to Regent Hospital Chairman Mohammad Shahed in a corruption case filed on charge of embezzling Tk 2 crore from Padma Bank (formerly Farmers Bank).

Justice M Enayetur Rahim, chamber judge of the SC's Appellate Division, passed the order following a petition filed by Anti-Corruption Commission, seeking a stay on the HC verdict.

The apex court judge also asked ACC to file a leave to appeal petition with this court against the HC verdict by October 24.

Shahed's bail was stayed as there are specific allegations against him of committing corruption, ACC's lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star.

MUNIA'S DEATH
PBI given
time again to
finish probe

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again asked Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to submit – by August 23 – the probe report in a case filed against Bashundhara Group Managing Director Sayem Sobhan Anvir and seven others over the rape and murder of a college student in Dhaka's Gulshan.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Begum Yasmin Ara passed the order after IO Md Alauddin, also an inspector of PBI, failed to submit the report.

With the latest one, the PBI took 16 dates to submit the report.

On July 13, the court asked the PBI to submit the report by yesterday.

Police recovered the body of the 21-year-old college student in a Gulshan flat on April 26 last year.

Her elder sister on September 6 filed a case with the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-8 of Dhaka, bringing allegations of rape and murder.

**PRAYER
TIMING**
AUGUST 2

Fazr Zohr As Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4-20 12-45 5-00 6-47 8-15

JAMAT 4-55 1-15 5-15 6-50 8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

'Dengue menace may spiral out of control'

Number of cases doubles in July compared to June; experts call for immediate steps

HELEMUL ALAM

In July, the number of dengue cases was double than that of June, showing signs that the situation might get out of hand.

The dengue death toll was only one in June, but it rose to 10 in July, according to data of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Experts have urged all city corporations to take immediate measures to control Aedes mosquitoes, otherwise the virus may further proliferate in August.

According to DGHS, the number of dengue cases was 737 in June and 1,571 in July.

In 2019, when the country faced over one lakh dengue patients, the number of cases in July was the third highest recorded in the last several years. DGHS data shows that in 2019, 16,253 cases were recorded in July, 2,286 in the same month in 2021, and 23 in 2020.

Entomologist Manzur A Chowdhury said actual case numbers of this year's July should be higher, as many remained unreported because DGHS received data from only 47 hospitals (government and private) in Dhaka.

Many patients do not get tested even after suffering from fever or do not get admitted to hospitals, for which they are not counted in the list, he said.

He, however, said that although cases are increasing, the situation will not get to an alarming stage, as people's movement is still



somewhat restricted due to Covid, and many do not go outside after getting a fever.

People will have to be vigilant about destroying Aedes breeding grounds and use insecticide twice a day in their homes, he explained.

Children will have to wear clothes that cover the whole body, so that Aedes mosquitoes cannot bite them. School authorities will have to change the dress code to introduce covering clothes, he said.

According to DGHS data, among the 10 dengue deaths, six occurred in Cox's Bazar.

Entomologist of Jahangirnagar University Prof Kabirul Bashar said they earlier predicted that dengue cases will be high in July and August, and so, authorities will have to take necessary measures.

It is certain that the number of cases will remain high, he added.

Hotspot management is crucial to control Aedes mosquitoes.

This means authorities will have to collect addresses of dengue patients from hospitals and identify dengue-prone areas, he said.

Even in areas where dengue cases are low, both authorities and residents will have to take steps to destroy mosquito breeding grounds, he explained.

At an inter-ministerial meeting last week, Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Md Tazul Islam said Bangladesh's success rate for controlling dengue and other mosquito-borne diseases is top among Asian countries.

The minister said from January to June, the number of dengue cases in Singapore was 13,000, in Malaysia 18,884, Indonesia 45,387, Thailand 5,196, the Philippines 51,622, and India 10,172.

However, Bangladesh saw 2,305 cases till July 26, which is the result of collective efforts, he claimed.

GOVT OFFICIALS
Petition to stop 'foreign trips' rejected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday summarily rejected a petition which sought its order on the government to stop "unnecessary" foreign trips of government officials – "in the name of training, meeting, seminars" – with taxpayers' money.

The bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Khizir Hayat passed the order after Attorney General AM Amin Uddin told this court that no government official has gone abroad for any unnecessary purpose or without permission from the government.

The attorney general also assured that the directives issued by the finance ministry on May 12 this year about banning the government officials' foreign trips will be followed strictly.

The finance ministry in a circular on May 12 said all exposure visits/study tours/travels for APA, innovations, workshops or seminars will remain suspended until further notice.

ASM Al Sonnet, a Dhaka University student and president of Muktijuddha Mancha, filed the petition on July 31, challenging the authorities' "failure" to stop unnecessary foreign trips of government officials.

'BNP the plunderer'

PM says party looted national resources during its rule, slams it for hurricane lamp movement

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said saving power and fuel oil does not mean that there had been looting in the sector.

"Rather, BNP plundered during their regime. After coming to power, we stopped that indiscriminate looting and developed the country," she said.

The PM said this while inaugurating a blood donation programme arranged by the Bangladesh Krishak League in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi-32.

She joined the programme virtually from her official residence Gono Bhaban.

Krishak League arranged the programme and discussion as part of the month-long programme of Awami League and its associate organisations to mark National Mourning Day.

Hasina slammed BNP for staging hurricane lamp protest against government's power saving measures.

"BNP leaders are holding demonstrations with hurricane lamps. Let's give them hurricane lamps to carry, and show them the door," the premier said.

The PM said all countries across the globe have been gone for austerity in power and fuel oil in the wake of worldwide crisis due to Russia-Ukraine war.

"Keeping that in mind we are maintaining austerity," she added.

She also said the present government upgraded the power sector with the capability of producing 24,000MW from only 3,500MW.

CHOLERA VACCINES
Drive for second dose starts tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The second round of the oral vaccination campaign against Cholera will begin tomorrow in five selected areas in Dhaka, said a press release.

During the first round – held between June 26 and July 2 – around 2.36 million people aged above one year and living in Jatrabari, Dakshin Khan, Sabujbagh, Mohammadpur and Mirpur areas received the first dose of the vaccines.

They will receive their second dose during the seven-day long second round of the campaign ending on August 10, in 700 vaccination centres in the five areas.

For this, they have to carry the vaccination card given during the first round to the same vaccination centres which will open from 8:00am to 4:00pm every day.

Under the supervision of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), the International Center for Diarrhoeal Disease and Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b) has been conducting the campaign.

"Those who have received the first dose must protect themselves against Cholera by receiving the second dose," said Prof Mohammad Nazmul Islam, the director of Disease Control at DGHS.

"I urge everyone to get vaccinated with the oral cholera vaccine, ensure safe water and sanitation and personal hygiene," said Dr Firdausi Qadri, senior scientist and acting senior director at icddr,b.

In April, a record number of diarrhoea patients were admitted to the icddr,b hospital.

In 2020, DGHS vaccinated 12 lakh people in Dhaka's six areas with the first dose of cholera vaccines.

The second round came to a halt due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



Although it's illegal to park on the main road, especially underneath a flyover, these pick-up vans have claimed the space as their own and treated it like a stand. Due to this reason, gridlock is ever prominent on this road beside the Karwan Bazar fish market.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HUQ