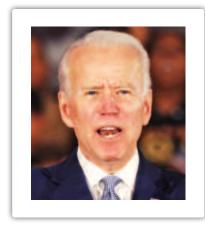
### Biden tests positive for Covid, fueling health worries



AFP, Las Vegas

US President Joe Biden tested positive for Covid with mild symptoms Wednesday, shortly after conceding he would consider dropping his reelection bid if doctors diagnosed him with a serious medical condition.

The 81-year-old Democrat gave reporters the thumbs up and said "I feel good" as he cut short a trip to Las Vegas and flew to his beach home in Delaware to go into isolation, which will take him off the campaign trail for

Biden thanked well-wishers on X, adding that "I will be isolating as I recover, and during this time I will continue to work to get the job done for the American people."

The infection comes at a critical moment for Biden's campaign, with the president seeking to show he is up to the job after a disastrous debate performance against rival Donald Trump sparked concerns about his health and calls from some Democrats for him to step aside.

It is also the latest development in a tumultuous few days in an already frenetic White House race that saw Trump survive an assassination attempt at a campaign rally.

Biden was forced to cancel a speech to a union representing Latino workers who will be crucial for his election bid, having attended a campaign event earlier in the day and given a radio interview.

His spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said Biden was vaccinated and boosted, was now taking the Covid medication Paxlovid and "continues to carry out the full duties of the office while in isolation.



Farmers in Mymensingh's Phulbaria upazila are seen producing red sugar, locally known as Lal Chini, using year-old traditional

#### TRADITIONAL LAL CHINI

# Fair price delights Mymensingh farmers

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh** 

Farmers involved in producing red sugar, locally known as Lal Chini, in Mymensingh's Phulbaria upazila are delighted due to a good production and fair price of the item this year.

Lal Chini is a cash crop for hundreds of farmers, mostly small and marginal, in different areas of Phulbaria including Radhakanai, Polashtali, Bidhyananda, Koierchala, Bakta, Kushmail, Kaladah, Enayetpur, Rangamatia, Sontoshpur and Chowdhar village.

Production of Lal Chini is a 200-yearold tradition in Phulbaria and the area is famous for the item, said locals.

Many farmers, who once diverted to other crops cultivation like pineapple, banana, lemon and turmeric due to low price of Lal Chini in the previous years, are now gradually returning to sugarcane cheap than the other crops as it requires has good potential to grow as an industry.

of their produce, said 90-year-old Muntaz Ali Fakir of Polashtali Chalapara village.

Muntaz's grandson Enamul Haque, an expatriate in Maldives, recently returned home and started expanding the cultivation area.

Enamul said he made a profit of around Tk 20,000 from his 20 decimals of land this year and he would go for as expanded cultivation next year. As both the production and prices are

quite good this year, each maund of Lal Chini is selling for Tk 6,000 to Tk 8,000 according to its quality, he said.

Farmer Dulal Mia of the locality, who had a reasonable profit from Lal Chini this year, said he will go for more sugarcane cultivation next year as the profit is much inspiring this year.

Cultivation of Lal Chini is comparatively

cultivation as they are getting a good price little watering, less qualtity of fertilizers and insecticides, the farmer said.

> Another farmer Adam Ali said they would get more profit if farmers could sell their products directly to the government

Farmers said sugarcane leaves and bagasse are also sold locally, which adds additional financial support to the farmers family.

Sub-Assistant Protection Officer Md Abu Raihan said sugarcane was cultivated on a total of 650 hectares of land in the upazila this year and they have a target to produce around 5,200 tonnes of Lal Chini worth around Tk 100 crore.

Department Mymensingh Agriculture Extension (DAE) Deputy Director Dr Nasrin Akhter Banu said Lal Chini is produced only in Phulbaria and it

### China for peace

foreign ministry.

He told reporters that they do not comment on the internal affairs of any country.

"It is unfortunate that there is violence and loss of life. However, we believe that the government of Bangladesh and people have the capacity and wisdom to solve their own problems," Wen said.

On the recent visit of the prime minister to China, he said, "After internal coordination, we discussed and are going to provide a package of grants, interest free-loan, preferential loan, and commercial loan. In total, it is \$2

The details of the package need to be finalised at the working level, he said, adding, "This demonstrates our support to Bangladesh. I believe this package will boost our bilateral cooperation and development." He told Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud that Chinese

special envoy on Asian affairs Wang Yingfan will be visiting Bangladesh soon and discuss the Rohingya crisis and the ways of solving it. The ambassador said China agrees that there was no

other solution except safe repatriation of the Rohingyas to

'It is a big problem for Bangladesh," he said, noting that conflict broke out in Myanmar, and it is intensifying in Rakhine too.

Bangladesh is hosting nearly 1.3 million Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char.

Wen shed light on Hasina's recent visit to China and discussed bilateral issues, including determining the focal point of Bangladesh in terms of comprehensive economic cooperation with China, celebrating 50 years of China's diplomatic relations with Bangladesh, and advancing comprehensive strategic cooperation.

Foreign Minister Hasan through the ambassador invited his Chinese counterpart to visit Bangladesh at a convenient time and urged China to build another road-tunnel in

### 30 establishments torched

The agitating students also set fire to a police outpost near the Madaripur launch terminal and the district Awami League office, according to police sources.

In Dhaka, protesters torched at least three police outposts in Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi-27 and Mirpur.

Towhidul Islam, additional deputy commissioner (Uttara division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said demonstrators set

fire to two vans, including one of the police, in Uttara. A vehicle of Border Guard Bangladesh was set on fire in Hatijheel around 6:00pm.

The Banani toll plaza of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway was set on fire around 9:00pm. On Wednesday evening, demonstrators torched the toll

plaza of the Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover in Jatrabari. Sources in the Fire Service and Civil Defence yesterday said they received information of at least 33 violence-related fire incidents across the country from July 17 to midnight last night. Twenty-three of those took place in the Dhaka city corporation

Over the last two days, one fire was reported in Narayanganj, two fire incidents were reported in Gaibandha, two in Rangpur city, and one each in Kushtia, Sirajganj, Barishal, Natore and Madaripur districts, the release said.

It added that six buses, two microbuses, 20 motorcycles, two offices of political parties, a toll plaza, a police station, a police box, a police car, and two government offices were damaged.

In another release, the fire service said that at least five vehicles of their department were damaged and four staffers were hurt till 8:30pm yesterday.

Talha Bin Zasim, media officer of the fire service, said the four came under an attack by a group of people when they were

premises.

Australia, India

The Indian High Commission also

An advisory issued by the mission

asked Indian nationals to reach out to

the High Commission and Assistant

High Commissions in Chattogram,

Sylhet, Rajshahi, and Khulna in case

of any urgency or need for assistance.

indicate several deaths and hundreds.

injured across Bangladesh. The

situation is extremely volatile.

Protests are likely to affect local

transportation services and make

getting in and out of Dhaka difficult.

vigilance and reconsider their travel

plans, especially to areas around

public universities. You should avoid

demonstrations and exercise caution

in the vicinity of any large gatherings.

remain aware of your surroundings,

including local events; and monitor

local news stations for updates," it

closed to the general public yesterday.

Mission personnel have been advised

to limit their movements to the

"Review personal security plans;

The US embassy in Dhaka was also

"US citizens should practice

The US embassy said reports

advised its citizens in Bangladesh

to avoid travel and minimise their

movement outside their living

### Internet service blocked across the country

FROM PAGE 12 Regulatory Telecommunication Commission internet communication is disrupted throughout the country due to fire in a Mohakhali building that houses data centres supplying a large volume of internet traffic.

According to the ISPAB, no fire was set in any building with the data centres. There was a fire in an adjacent building and some overhead cables of data centres located in the vicinity were damaged.

The damage would affect at best 20 percent of internet supply, according to industry insiders who spoke on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter.

Meanwhile, Zunaid Ahmed Palak, the state minister for telecom and ICT. said mobile internet services will be resumed as soon as the environment and the law-and-order situation stabilise.

"A vested quarter is trying to derail the law-and-order situation by spreading rumours on social media — that is why we have disconnected the mobile internet services without any prior declaration," he said at the inauguration of 20 e-learning courses of an ICT Division project in the capital yesterday.

Contacted, Grameenphone, the country's leading mobile operator, said in a statement: "Considering the ongoing situation in the country, the government has temporarily stopped mobile internet services. The honourable state minister has already given his statement in the media. We are dependent on the authorities to restart the mobile internet services. We are in constant communication with the authorities in this regard."

Shahed Alam, chief corporate and regulatory officer of Robi, said the carrier has received threatening messages from its subscribers to resume mobile internet services or else its headquarters would be attacked

## New Gaza strikes after Netanyahu warning

AFP, Gaza Strip

Palestinians yesterday mourned relatives killed in overnight Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip, where Israel's prime minister has vowed to intensify the pressure on militants even as demands grow for him to reach a deal that would free hostages.

AFPTV images showed mourners at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir el-Balah city, where several whiteshrouded corpses lay on the ground. One man cradled the covered body of Rescuers confirmed several people

had been killed in separate Israeli strikes in central Gaza.

At the hospital, Ahmed Abu Muheisen said one strike had targeted his cousin's family in the Al-Zuwaida

"His children and his wife were

martyred and so was he," Muheisen

"Enough, enough already!" said another mourner, Eid Abu Rakab. In Israel too, there are similar calls.

Anti-government demonstrators, sometimes marching by the tens of thousands, and separate rallies by families and other supporters of hostages held by Hamas, have stepped up their actions demanding the government reach a deal to free the

"We feel this is a critical moment," Osnat Sharabi Matalon, two of whose brothers were taken hostage, said at a protest on Wednesday in Tel Aviv.

She said they demand a deal before Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu travels to the United States, where he is scheduled to address Congress on

During the more than nine months



of war, Netanyahu has consistently

On Tuesday he said "we are hurting" Hamas and this is "exactly the time to increase the pressure even more."

He told parliament: "We have got

coalition, including National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, oppose

vowed to eradicate Hamas and bring home all the hostages.

them by the throat." Far-right members of his governing

a truce deal. On Thursday Ben Gvir

#### surrender" accord with Hamas. Israel's military offensive has killed at least 38,848 people, mostly

said Netanyahu must not make a

civilians, according to data from the health ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza. The latest toll issued Thursday included 54 deaths in the past 24

hours, it said. All health facilities in southern

Gaza have been pushed to "breaking point" due to an influx of people wounded by Israeli bombardments, the International Committee of the Red Cross said on Thursday.

### Journo killed

FROM PAGE 12

Alauddin Arif, special correspondent of Bangla daily Pratidiner Bangladesh, also suffered injuries from shotgun pellets while MM Sikandar, senior reporter of Green TV, was wounded in the capital's Rampura, Mohiuddin

Jannatur Mohona, staff reporter of Desh TV, and its cameraperson Abdul Khaleq were injured near Karnaphuli Garden City in the capital's Shantinagar, he added.

Senior Reporter of DBC News Farhana Yasmin Juthi, Special Correspondent of The Business Standard Qutubuddin Muhammad Jashim, and Staff Reporter of Banglavision Forrukh Babu were also FROM PAGE 12 injured, according to a press release of the DRU.

### HSC, equivalent

FROM PAGE 12

Earlier, all public and private universities had already been declared closed due to the situation surrounding the quota movement.

Additionally, all secondary and higher secondary level educational institutions (schools, madrasas, and technical institutions) under the Ministry of Education, polytechnic institutes, and all primary schools in city corporation areas have been declared closed until further notice.

## Eerie silence reigns

visited the vice chancellor's residence

diplomatic enclave.

separately.

In the afternoon, police and students from different schools and colleges chased and counter-chased each other in Azimpur and Nilkhet

At Jahangirnagar University, the situation was calm all day long. A large number of law enforcers were deployed on the campus, reports our Savar correspondent.

Around 6:00pm, some 300 students, mostly from areas close to the campus, gathered in front of the main entrance to the university. They chanted slogans protesting police action on protesters across the county.

Students of Rajshahi University blocked the Dhaka-Rajshahi highway for about two hours from 2:30pm yesterday. Several hundred students from the Binodpur area staged the demonstration near the main entrance to RU.

## SC to hear pleas against HC verdict

in Dhaka's Bailey Road area, as the chamber judge of the Appellate Division is on service round the clock.

Earlier in the day, Amin Uddin told The Daily Star that he would move an application before the Appellate Division on Sunday for the early hearing on the government's leave to appeal petition against the HC judgement.

"Considering the importance of the issue, the apex court may hold the hearing on the leave to appeal petition on Sunday or Monday," he

On July 16, the government filed the petition with the SC seeking the scrapping of the HC verdict.

In the petition, the government said it is a policy decision of the government whether to keep the provision of quotas in public service, and the court cannot interfere in this.

On that day, the attorney general told reporters that the Appellate Division is scheduled to hear the leave to appeal petition on August 7.

However, Law Minister Anisul Huq told a press briefing yesterday that the prime minister asked him to take an initiative to hold an early hearing of the quota-related case at the SC.

The minister said he already

take an initiative in this regard and the AG would appeal to the SC on Sunday Meanwhile, two Dhaka University

students vesterday filed a similar leave

to appeal petition with the Appellate

Division challenging the June 5HC verdict. Al Sadi Bhuiyan, a student of anthropology and also the president of Dhaka University Journalists Association, and Ahnaf Sayeed Khan, a student of Urdu, submitted the

petition through senior lawyer Shah

Monjurul Hoque. Following a writ petition, the HC on June 5 declared illegal the circular that cancelled the quota system in government jobs.

The circular, issued by the public administration ministry on October 4, 2018, said that in the case of direct recruitment to the posts of 9th grade (formerly class 1) and 10th to 13th grades (formerly class 2), the appointments should be made based

The HC in the full text of its judgement, released on July 14, also directed the government to restore and maintain the quotas for freedom fighters' children, districts, women, physically challenged people, tribes,

instructed the attorney general to minor races, and ethnic groups and others, if any, and to publish a notification in this regard as soon as possible, preferably within three months, from the date of receipt of its order. The court, however, said the

government can change, reduce or

increase the ratio or percentage of

the quotas in public jobs, if necessary,

and can fill the vacant posts from

the general merit list if any quota in government recruitment is not Protesting the HC judgment, students staged demonstrations at different educational institutions, including Dhaka University. They took to the streets on July 1, demanding the reinstatement of the

2018 circular. Students intensified their protests across the country since July 4 as the Appellate Division did not stay the HC verdict following a government The protesters are holding

demonstrations, demanding reforms of the quota system through the formulation of a law. Amid such a situation, the government and two Dhaka University students moved two petitions before

Clashes have been taking place in different parts of the country for several days regarding the protests demanding reform of the quota system in government jobs.

the Appellate Division seeking stay