



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



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"The government has destroyed every democratic institution and the electoral system by depriving people of their right to vote. The economy is in a bad shape while banks and the share market got depleted."
BNP STANDING COMMITTEE MEMBER SELIMA RAHMAN



"America is back, ready to lead the world."
US PRESIDENT-ELECT JOE BIDEN



"We must learn from the summer and not repeat the same mistakes, relaxing too fast."
EU CHIEF URSULA VON DER LEYEN WARNS EUROPEAN COUNTRIES



Farewell, magical MARADONA

Death of a man, not his legend

AL-AMIN

AFP, Buenos Aires

Diego Maradona, one of the greatest footballers of all time, died Wednesday at the age of 60, plunging his sport and his native Argentina into mourning.

Renowned along with Pele as one of the greatest players ever to play the game, the Argentine World Cup-winning captain died of a heart attack, having undergone brain surgery earlier this month, a member of his entourage told AFP.

Maradona will forever be known for his "Hand of God" goal against England in the 1986 World Cup quarter-final in Mexico, when he appeared to use his hand to push the ball into the net before later swerving through the English defenders for a memorable second goal that sealed a victory.

Pele said Maradona had been a "dear friend" and said he hoped they would "play together in the sky" one day.

Gary Lineker, who was in the England team defeated in 1986, tweeted that Maradona was "arguably the greatest of all time" but made a reference to that infamous goal by adding: "After a blessed but troubled life, hopefully he'll finally find some comfort in the hands of God. #RipDiego"

Lionel Messi, the Argentine considered one of the world's greatest modern-day players, said Maradona was "eternal". Argentine President Alberto Fernandez immediately announced three days of national mourning in the South American country.

Shortly before the announcement that shocked the world, Argentine media reported Maradona had suffered a serious health setback on Wednesday

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As we were travelling to St Petersburg from Moscow by train while covering the 2018 World Cup in Russia, one inquisitive Argentine reporter asked why his country has such frenzied fan following in Bangladesh. The response was plain and simple. It's because of Diego Maradona.

Maradona is as popular in Bangladesh as he is in his own country. It will not be an overstatement to say that Bangladesh becomes the de facto home of Albiceleste come the football World Cup every four years.

Football transcends boundaries and as its biggest icon, Maradona the magician with a magnetic left foot, has carved a lasting place in the hearts and minds of crores of Bangladesh fans, over

39 more die, 2,156 infected in 24 hours

UNB, Dhaka

The country saw a spike in daily Covid-19 deaths yesterday as the health authorities registered 39 deaths in 24 hours till 8:00am.

A total of 2,156 new infections and 2,302 recoveries were recorded during the 24-hour period.

With the latest count, the total tally of infection and death reached 454,146 and 6,487 respectively, said the Directorate General of Health Services.

The death and recovery rates stood at 1.43 percent and 81.29 percent respectively. So far, 369,179 Covid-19 patients have recovered.

Bangladesh reported its first novel coronavirus cases on March 8. The number

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PROBABLE VACCINE RECIPIENTS

Frontliners to be first in line

First shipment from Gavi likely in Feb-June

WASIM BIN HABIB and MOUJID AHMED SUJAN

With Bangladesh securing nearly 100 million doses of Covid vaccine from two sources by next year, the most pertinent question now is who will be vaccinated first.

No decision has been made yet but frontline healthcare workers are the ones likely to be vaccinated first as the country expects to receive the first shipment of vaccine doses from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, between February and June 2021, said officials of the health directorate.

Bangladesh will buy 68 million doses from Gavi under a global arrangement called COVAX facility and another 30 million doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca

vaccine from Serum Institute of India via Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

The officials said the government is developing National Vaccine Deployment Plan determining the priority population for the vaccines.

Priority is likely to be given to the healthcare workers including doctors, nurses, health management and support workers, and technicians directly involved in treatment and other Covid-related activities, they mentioned.

This goes in line with the recommendations by the World Health Organisation and also the foundational principles of the COVAX collaboration, a

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THE VACCINE RACE IN NUMBERS

PRE-CLINICAL STAGE	154
PHASE 1 TRIAL	21
PHASE 2 TRIAL	13
PHASE 3 TRIAL	10

School admissions by lottery this time

Applications to be taken online

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

School admission in the coming academic session will be based on lottery and the application process will be done online.

The decision has been made to avoid health risks amid the Covid-19 pandemic, Education Minister Dipu Moni said at a virtual press briefing yesterday.

He also said 50 percent quota, instead of the current 40 percent, would be reserved for students for admission to their local school in the capital. Besides, students in Dhaka will be able to select school from five under the cluster-based lottery system.

Dipu Moni hinted that the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and the Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSC) examinations next year could get delayed by a month or two. Besides, the results of this year's SSC tests would be given priority in deciding the results of this year's HSC examinations, which could not take place due to the pandemic.

The minister then assured that the pending final exams at the National University and

technical institutions would be held soon following the health guidelines.

Speaking on the school admission, the minister asked all non-government secondary schools not to collect development, laboratory, library, and magazine fees from students while admitting them for the coming session.

LOTTERY
Dipu Moni said they decided to complete the admission process through lottery following consultation with experts, head teachers at different schools and officials from the education and the primary and mass education ministries.

She hoped the admission process would be over by January 15. Details about the process, including the lottery system, would be disclosed on December 7.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prof Syed Golam Faruk, director general of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, also said admission to the primary section of secondary schools would be done through lottery.

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PREPARING FOR 2ND WAVE O2 supply still not optimised

MOUJID AHMED SUJAN

Although hospitals across the country struggled during the first wave of Covid-19 transmission due to a lack of central oxygen supply, the authorities said they were still relying on cylinder-based oxygen supply.

As the rate of Covid-19 transmission is rising by the day again, giving credence to fears of a second wave, experts said the efforts to arrange proper hospital treatment for infected people must be completed immediately and there is no scope to repeat mistakes.

In a meeting with journalists yesterday, top officials of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), with Director General Prof ABM Khurshid Alam in the chair, talked about their preparations regarding the second wave.

Asked how many district level hospitals have centralised oxygen supply

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THE VACCINE ROADMAP

Govt is now working on developing a National Vaccine Deployment Plan for Covid-19 and exploring different sources of vaccines.

GAVI, THE VACCINE ALLIANCE
Bangladesh will get 68 million doses of vaccines from Gavi for at least 20% of its population (34 million) within 2021. Each person will need 2 doses. Price of per dose estimated at \$1.60 to \$2.

SERUM INSTITUTE, INDIA
30 million doses of Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine will come from Serum Institute of India (SII) through Beximco Pharmaceuticals. This will cost \$5 per dose including transportation cost. Tk 735.77 crore allocated to purchase vaccines from Serum.

SINOVAC
China's Sinovac requested Bangladesh to conduct phase-III trial of its vaccine in the country. It will cost \$3.5 million. If Bangladesh agrees to fund the trial, Sinovac will supply the vaccines. Double dose vaccine may cost between \$11 and \$16.

RUSSIAN SPUTNIK-V
Govt is communicating with Russia to get the Sputnik-V vaccines approved by the Russian Ministry of Health in August.

SANOFI/ GSK
Two Bangladeshi institutes have stated their desire to host phase-III clinical trial of Sanofi and GSK's protein based vaccine.

Pfizer
Govt wrote to Pfizer Inc. USA to secure their vaccine and technology transfer. However, this vaccine will require cold chain temperature of about -70 degree Celsius. Bangladesh has no cold chain capacity to ensure effective management for this kind of vaccines.



Doctors, nurses, health workers and technicians who are directly involved in treatment and other Covid-19 related activities are set to get priority in vaccination plan.

13.82 crore people to be vaccinated

PHASE-I
3% of the population (51.84 lakh) will be vaccinated, to be followed by another 7% (1.20 crore).

PHASE-II
Another 10% of the population (1.72 crore) will be vaccinated.

PHASE-III
Next 20% of the population (3.45 crore) will be vaccinated, to be followed by another 40% (6.91 crore).

WHEN TO GET THE VACCINE

- First vaccine shipment is expected in Feb-June 2021
- First 30 million doses to be administered in 6 months (50 lakh doses per month)
- Total budget for this is Tk 317.8 crore



SAUDI LABOUR REFORM

New initiative offers hope for migrants

JAMIL MAHMUD

As Saudi Arabia announced a new labour reform initiative to ease foreign workers' contractual restrictions, migrant rights activists and officials hope the move will improve the conditions of thousands of Bangladeshi workers in the oil-rich country.

The migrant workers, who are often subjected to various forms of abuse and exploitation, will be allowed to have more freedom in job mobility once the Labour Reform Initiative (LRI) comes into effect on March 14 next year, they said.

The reform initiative announced earlier this month would also lessen the restrictions on exit from and re-entry into the kingdom as it seeks to remove some elements of the "kafala" sponsorship system. The LRI would apply to all expatriates employed in the private sector.

The seven-decade-old "kafala" system ties migrant workers to one employer or sponsor, known as "kafeel", whose permission they need to change jobs, leave and re-enter into the country -- which rights groups have been criticising as exploitative and a form of modern slavery. "Most of the Bangladeshi migrant workers are expected to get the benefit since they are employed in the private sector," said Aminul Islam, labour welfare counsellor at the Bangladesh Consulate General in Jeddah.

"The initiative will be more fruitful in the migrant workers' immigration process," he told this newspaper over the phone.

Despite being legally eligible, Bangladeshi migrant

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FR TOWER EXTENSION

Rupayan chief, 15 Rajuk officials responsible

ACC probe finds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rupayan Housing Chairman Liakat Ali Khan Mukul and 15 former and current Rajuk officials are among those responsible for the illegal vertical extension of FR Tower in Banani, according to investigators.

In its 15-month probe, the Anti-Corruption Commission also found lessee of the tower Syed Md Hossain Imam Faruk and Managing Director of Quasem Industries Tasvir Ul Islam involved in the corruption. On June 25, 2019, months after a fire broke out at FR Tower leaving 25 dead and 73 others injured, ACC Deputy Director Abu Bakkar Siddiqui filed a case. He was later appointed to investigate the case.

He has recently submitted the investigation report, which was approved by ACC yesterday.

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