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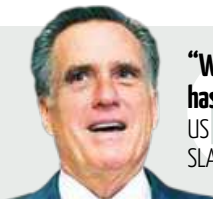
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"India will remain silent, China will give veto. And our government will say we have taken a magnificent foreign policy. The government is saying so just to stay in office."
BNP SECRETARY GENERAL MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR ON THE ROHINGYA ISSUE



"With vaccines rolling out, crime will increase dramatically."
INTERPOL CHIEF JUERGEN STOCK



"We've come to recognise that the president has a blind spot when it comes to Russia."
US REPUBLICAN SENATOR MITT ROMNEY SLAMS TRUMP

6cr Covid shots expected by June

Cabinet secy says these are in addition to 3 crore approval-pending doses from Serum; experts see distribution hurdles

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

Bangladesh will get six crore shots of Covid-19 vaccines between May and June next year from the COVAX facility, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam said yesterday.

This will be in addition to 3 crore doses of the Oxford-Astrazeneca vaccine from the Serum Institute of India (SII) that the government expects to start reaching the country between late January and early February, he said referring to Health Minister Zahid Maleque's words in yesterday's cabinet meeting.

Officials had earlier said Bangladesh will buy the first 6.8 crore shots of vaccines under the COVAX facility -- a global initiative coordinated by WHO, GAVI and CEPI -- at a subsidised price ranging from \$1.6 to \$2.

The Oxford-Astrazeneca vaccines are supposed to arrive in Bangladesh in instalments of 50 lakh doses every month, according to a trilateral memorandum of understanding signed by the Bangladesh government, SII and Bangladesh's Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd on November 6.

"We'll get three crore doses of vaccines for 1.5 crore people at the end of January or early February next year and six crore doses for three crore people by May-June next," he told reporters after the cabinet meeting at the Bangladesh Secretariat, reports BSS.

He said there may be "at best one month's delay or advanced delivery" of the vaccine shots from COVAX.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina chaired the meeting, joining it virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

On December 13, the government finalised the MoU by signing the procurement contract.

Once the vaccine is approved for human application, Beximco Pharma will buy each dose from Serum for \$4 and then supply it to the government at \$5 per dose.

The timing of the arrival may not, however, be certain as the SII CEO said recently that

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Relatives of a woman try to rush her to Dhaka Medical College Hospital from Mugda Medical College and Hospital in a rickshaw van yesterday. The unconscious woman was brought to the Mugda hospital from Uttar Manda on this van. Doctors there referred her to DMCH.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

UK isolated over virus variant

Dozens of countries impose travel bans

AGENCIES

The world yesterday scrambled to contain a fast-spreading mutation of the coronavirus sweeping Britain, as a growing number of countries suspended flights from the UK, sowing travel chaos ahead of the holidays.

Dozens of countries from India to Argentina have banned flights from Britain in fear of the new virus strain, which has delivered a bleak reminder that the pandemic is far from under control even as vaccinations bring a rush of optimism.

European stocks, oil prices and the British pound all plummeted over the developments.

At least 1.69 million people have been killed by Covid-19 since the virus first emerged in China a year ago, with more than 10,000 people still dying daily.

While experts do not believe the new variant of the virus -- one of several -- is

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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

Bangladesh up two notches

Stays behind four neighbours

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Bangladesh has moved up two notches in the Human Development Index this year, but remains behind four other South Asian countries.

Sri Lanka, Maldives, India and Bhutan are ahead of Bangladesh in the index, while Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan are behind.

United Nations Development Programme's "The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene" was unveiled at the Planning Commission in the capital yesterday, six days after the global launch.

Top UNDP officials said Bangladesh moved up two notches to 133 among 189 countries thanks to the remarkable progress made in life expectancy, per capita income, and other socio-economic areas.

Norway tops the HDI list, followed by Ireland and Switzerland.

In 2019, 24.6 percent of Bangladesh's population was multidimensionally poor, with a further 18.2 percent classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty, said Balazs Hovarth, senior economic advisor to UNDP Asia Pacific, while making a presentation virtually on the new report.

Both numbers have markedly fallen in the past decades. "But this is a serious area that requires policy attention," he added.

Besides, the pandemic might wipe out years of progress, he apprehended.

Sudipto Mukerjee, UNDP Bangladesh resident representative, said multidimensional poverty identifies multiple deprivations at the household and individual levels in health, education and living standard.

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BANGLADESH BETWEEN 1990 AND 2019

HDI value increased by 60.4 percent

Life expectancy at birth increased by 14.4 years

Mean years of schooling increased by 3.4 years

Gross national income per capita increased by 220.1 percent

Around 25% of population remain multidimensionally poor

A strange scheme to steal NID info

Sandwip fishermen, others fall victim to a local racket

FM MIZANUR RAHMAN

Krishnapad, 45, has spent his whole life in the coastal area of Swandip's Sontoshpur union and earned for his family and himself as a fisherman.

He would have to struggle for his little income due to the government ban on fishing and depend on aid from different sources.

In late 2018, a local came to their neighbourhood and told the fishermen that they would receive government aid if they provide a copy of their National ID and their biometric fingerprints.

Like Krishnapad, thousands of fishermen and poor people of Sontoshpur area have been providing their fingerprints and NID cards to the syndicate for two kgs of flour and two kgs of potatoes.

But this substantially small aid turned into their nightmare as a huge number of mobile SIMs were withdrawn using their NID cards and fingerprints.

Now these "unauthorized" SIM cards are active and those who provided their information don't know who are operating those.

A woman named Joshna Begum of the union lodged a General Diary with Sandwip Police Station on October 30, 2018, mentioning that 13 SIM cards were active against

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New Virus Strain Saudi Arabia suspends all int'l flights for a week

Migrants in a pickle

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saudi Arabia has suspended all international flights for a week amid reports of the appearance of a new mutated strain of novel coronavirus in the UK.

The suspension casts uncertainty on the return of Bangladeshi expatriate workers to their workplaces in the Gulf country.

The General Authority of Civil Aviation (Gaca), Saudi Arabia in a circular yesterday announced the temporary suspension of all international flights to and from Saudi Arabia.

It, however, said some flights would be allowed in exceptional circumstances.

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List money launderers with dual citizenship

HC asks immigrations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday sought a list of names and addresses of Bangladeshi nationals with dual citizenships and dual passports, who have purchased or built houses abroad by laundering money.

While hearing a Suo Moto (voluntary) rule issued on November 22, the court ordered the immigration department under the special branch (SB) of police to submit the list before it by February 28 next year.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Ahmed Sohel asked the head of the immigration department under the SB to submit the list after collecting information from records of three international airports -- Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka, Shah Amanat International Airport in

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Sacks of garbage, mostly single use plastic bottles, are dumped in the Buriganga river near Islambagh in the capital. It has been going on for so long that quite a bit of the river has been filled up. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Losses by State Jute, Sugar Mills Mismanagement, graft to blame

Researchers also point to lack of proper planning

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mismanagement, corruption and absence of proper planning are responsible for the losses incurred by the state-owned jute and sugar mills, and workers in no way can be blamed, a group of educationists and researchers said.

They revealed the findings of a research on the recent closures of the jute and sugar mills at a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday.

They also said the argument that privatisation would lead to the expansion of the industries had no basis.

They argued that about 75 industries in the country were handed over private owners from 1993 to 2010. Thirty-one of them were later found closed. Land and equipment of those industries were either looted or huge bank loans were taken showing the abandoned land.

Prof Mohammad Tanjimuddin Khan and Prof Moshahida Sultana of Dhaka University and researcher Maha Mirza revealed the research findings. The report was prepared following field visits to different jute mills in Khulna and sugar mills in northern districts.

Prof Anu Muhammad, Jyotirmoy Barua, sugarcane farmer Ferdous Imam, and a former jute mills worker, among others, spoke at the press conference, organised by Sarbojonkotha, a journal on politics, economics and society.

The government has recently closed 25 state-owned jute mills due to huge losses incurred in operating them, throwing around 50,000 workers into uncertainty.

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