



EU readies Covid vaccine rollout

France, Spain, Japan join others to report first cases of more infectious virus variant

AFP, Paris

The European Union teed up a vaccine rollout yesterday, even as countries in the bloc were forced back into lockdown by a new strain of the virus, believed to be more infectious, that has spread from Britain to France and Spain and even as far as Japan.

The pandemic has claimed more than 1.7 million lives and is still running rampant in much of the world, but the recent launching of inoculation campaigns has boosted hopes that 2021 could bring a respite.

First doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine arrived in hard-hit Italy, Spain and France yesterday morning ready for distribution to elderly care facilities and hospital staff.

"We'll get our freedom back, we'll be able to embrace again," Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio said as he urged Italians to get the shot.

Vaccinations in all 27 European Union countries will begin today, after regulators approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on December 21.

Several countries including France, Spain, Japan, Denmark, Lebanon, Germany, Australia and the Netherlands have reported cases of the new strain, which has sent jitters through already overstretched health services.

More than 25 million total infections have been recorded in Europe, according to an AFP tally on Friday, and Russia yesterday said it had topped three million.

The UK itself passed 70,000 coronavirus deaths on Friday and is confronted with surging infections from the new strain. Six million people

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Dhaka South City Corporation has dug up a trench in Lalbagh Bazar Road for a development project causing immense sufferings to locals. They risk falling into the trench as they cross it with bamboo-made bridges that have no guard rails.

Cold wave may worsen in 2-3 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cold may get worse within the next two or three days as the temperature is likely to fall further.

"The ongoing mild cold spell may turn into a moderate cold wave," said Hafizur Rahman, a meteorologist.

"The temperature may come down to 6 degree Celsius at some places. It may fluctuate between 6 to 8 degree Celsius," he added.

"The temperature may start falling from Sunday and it may continue to fall for the next two to three days," he told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

The meteorologist also said that multiple mild to moderate cold spells may sweep the country in January.

Yesterday's lowest
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Abdul Kader passes away

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Renowned actor Abdul Kader breathed his last in the capital's Evercare Hospital at 8:20 am yesterday after battling stage IV cancer.

He was 69 years old

On December 6, the actor was taken to Christian Medical Hospital in Chennai, where he was diagnosed with cancer after a tumor was detected in his body from a computerised tomography scan. Doctors had declared that he was physically too weak to undergo chemotherapy.

Kader was then brought to Dhaka

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Abbe Pierre meets Mujib

December 27, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

ABBE PIERRE CALLS ON PM Abbe Pierre, world renowned philanthropist and chief patron of the United Towns Organisation of Europe, calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Gono Bhaban today and discusses with him his committee's Town Twining Programme in Bangladesh. He is accompanied by the French Charge d'Affaires Philippe Baude. Pierre, who is heading a 70-member team to Bangladesh says that on behalf of his organisation he has donated \$40,000 for the construction of house for low-paid employees. His committee has also taken up a Tk 5 crore plan for Town Twining Scheme and under this scheme 25 different cities of France, Italy, Belgium and Denmark would help for the development of 25 towns in Bangladesh. It may be mentioned that Pierre had supported the Liberation War of Bangladesh and contributed in various ways to the Liberation Movement of the country.

TRADE ACCORD WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND BULGARIA Bangladesh has recently entered into two trade agreements with

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4 held for rape, murder of 8-yr-old

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

Police yesterday arrested four persons for allegedly killing an eight-year-old girl on December 14 in Bogura's Dhunat upazila.

The arrestees are Bappi Ahmed, 22, Kamal Pasha, 35, Shamim Reza, 22, and Bipu Sheikh, 21, said police.

According to a case statement, Mahi Umme Tabassum, 8, of the upazila's Nashrotpur village, was killed while she went to attend a waz mehfil with her grandparents.

The victim's father filed a case with Dhunat Police Station under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act the next day.

Ali Ashraf Bhuiyan, superintendent of Bogura

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Spacecraft set for festive flyby of Venus



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A spacecraft designed and built in the UK is getting ready for the first of many flybys of Venus as it heads for the Sun in a mission to unlock its secrets.

The Solar Orbiter will use the gravitational force of the planet to bring it closer to the Sun while, at the same time, tilting its orbit to observe the star from a different perspective.

The closest approach will take place at 12.39pm UK time on 27 December, when the spacecraft will be around 4,700 miles from the cloud tops of Venus.

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Journo held in case filed under DSA

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The Detective Branch (DB) of police yesterday arrested a journalist in connection with a harassment case filed by a pro-Awami League councillor candidate in Chatmohar upazila of Pabna.

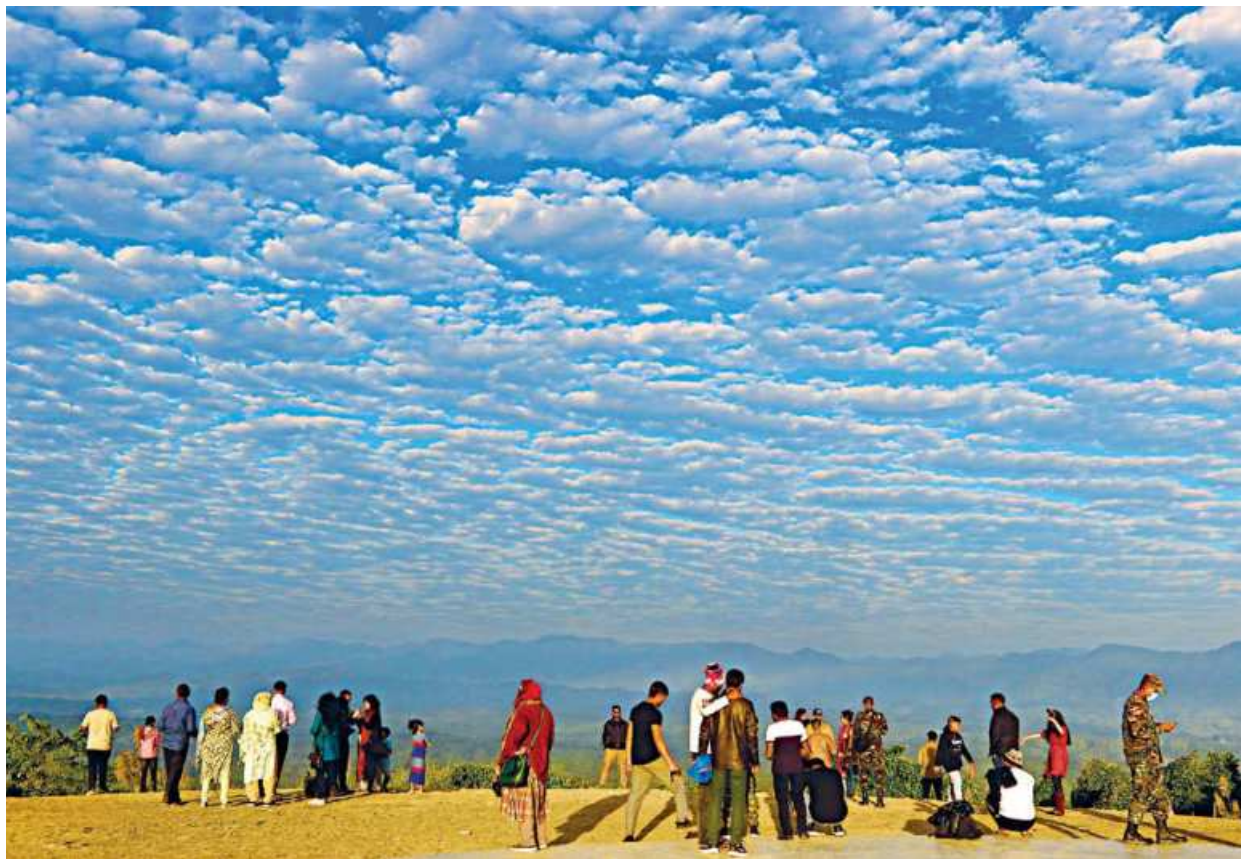
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PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 27

| | Fajr | Zohr | Asr | Maghrib | Esha |
|--------|------|-------|------|---------|------|
| AZAN | 5:25 | 12:45 | 3:45 | 5:24 | 7:00 |
| JAMAAT | 6:00 | 1:15 | 4:00 | 5:27 | 7:30 |

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Tourists at Sajek in Khagrachhari enjoying the view of a beautiful blue sky with scattered altocumulus cloud surrounding the mountains above greenery. Although a cold wave accompanied by fog is sweeping over the country, the view from Sajek remains crystal clear. The photo was taken at 4:15pm on Friday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

CURBING CORONAVIRUS

China hails its 'extraordinary' feat

AFP, Beijing

China's ruling Communist Party leaders have congratulated themselves on their "extremely extraordinary" success in handling the Covid-19 outbreak domestically, ahead of a World Health Organization probe into the disease's origins.

China faced a barrage of criticism at home and abroad over its initial handling of the virus, which emerged in the central city of Wuhan last December.

China's Politburo, the top decision-

making body of the Communist Party, said late Friday that the party leadership "played a decisive role in leading ... China in prevailing over the rare risks and challenges this year."

"At the critical moment ... the Party Central Committee took a long-term view ... achieving an extremely extraordinary glory in this extremely unusual year," state news agency Xinhua reported, citing a statement issued after the two-day meeting.

China has largely curbed the spread of the virus, and was one of the only major

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Top Hefajat men threatening us

Claims family of late Ahmed Shafi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Late Hefajat chief Ahmed Shafi's family members yesterday told reporters that top leaders of the Islamist organisation have been threatening them.

Shafi's brother-in-law Md Moin Uddin, who filed a case on December 16 accusing 36 Hefajat leaders and activists of killing Shafi, told a press conference at Chattogram Press Club that some of the accused were trying to force him to withdraw the case.

He said the family was receiving the threats from Hefajat-e-Islam Joint Secretary General Mamunul Haque, who was accused in the case, and its Amir Junayed Babunagari.

He added that Shafi's family members have been

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