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Your Right to Know

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"It cannot be expected from those who do not practice democracy within their own party, will establish democracy in the country."

AL GENERAL SECRETARY OBAIDUL QUADER ABOUT THE BNP



"We must wage another war with courage for the restoration of democracy in this month of victory. We've to take a vow that we'll either restore democracy or die in this war."

BNP LEADER GAYESHWAR CHANDRA ROY



"Vaccines do not equal zero Covid. Vaccination will add a major, major, powerful tool to the tool kit that we have. But by themselves, they will not do the job."

WHO EMERGENCIES DIRECTOR MICHAEL RYAN

## Fresh threat haunts Halda

Chattogram Wasa plans to extract one third of daily water flow in dry season; experts warn of severe impact, question faulty feasibility study



One of the two plants in Chattogram that are currently withdrawing 18 crore litres of water a day from the Halda.

PHOTO: FILE

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Chattogram

A proposed project of Chattogram Wasa set to withdraw 14 crore litres of water from the Halda river daily for an economic zone poses serious threat to the unique water body, the lone breeding ground for natural spawning of carp fish in South Asia.

The agency has already been extracting 18 crore litres of water daily from the river, also home to the endangered South Asian river dolphin, for the use of city dwellers since 2018.

It is now planning to withdraw a further 14 crore litres from Halda a day for factories in the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Shilpa

Nagar at Mirsarai, Chattogram, under a Tk 3,589 crore project.

Once the project is implemented, the total withdrawal will stand at around one third of total water flow in the dry season.

Halda experts and environmentalists warned of a drastic impact on the biodiversity of the river, which has been experiencing severe salinity since 2016 due to decline in its water flow.

Dozens of sluice gates, irrigation projects, and rubber dams along 98km of the river and its tributaries have contributed to reduced water flow.

A feasibility study done by the Institute

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Environmental activists release paper boats on the Narai river in Banasree area of the capital as an expression of their demand for restoring the flow of the river. The symbolic gesture was made yesterday morning in the victory month of Mujib Borsho to make people understand the importance of the issue, the organisers said.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Be cautious, follow health guidelines

PM asks people

Bss, UNB, Dhaka

Mentioning that the USA and many European countries were seeing a fresh surge in Covid-19 cases, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon all to be more cautious as the cold intensifies.

"Follow the health guidelines properly so that the coronavirus cannot affect your health," she said.

The PM was addressing a programme virtually marking the course-completion parade of BCB 95th batch from the Gono Bhaban. The parade was held at BCB Training Centre and College in Satkania, Chattogram.

Hasina said her government has already taken all possible measures to face the possible second wave of the pandemic.

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## Antigen testing finally begins

The rapid testing to detect Covid-19 now available free of cost in 10 dists; 35 more die, 1,888 infected in 24hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday introduced the much talked about antigen-based rapid testing for free in 10 districts across the country.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque inaugurated the testing through a video conference from his village home in Manikganj. Health Secretary Abdul Mannan and the director general of the health directorate also participated in the event from their homes in the capital.

The testing process of samples from three patients in Jashore was aired live at the virtual event. Two of the tests produced negative results while another was shown to be under process.

According to the testing protocol, people who would test negative for Covid-19 under the antigen-based testing would again give samples for RT-PCR testing.

The nine other districts are: Brahmanbaria, Gaibandha, Joypurhat, Madaripur, Meherpur, Munshiganj, Panchagarh, Patuakhali and Sylhet.

The antigen-based rapid testing is an easy-to-use molecular test -- alternative to the sophisticated RT-PCR tests -- which detects the presence of the virus itself.

After months of bureaucratic exercises, the health ministry on September 17 decided to introduce antigen-based rapid testing at 39 public hospitals and specialised institutes in areas which did not have RT-PCR testing facilities.

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## BUSINESS

### Bangladesh signs trade deal with Bhutan today

Bangladesh will sign its maiden preferential trade agreement with Bhutan as the country looks to retain duty benefit following its graduation to a developing country from the least developed nation category. Under the deal, Bangladesh will enjoy duty benefit on the exports of 100 products such as garments, processed agricultural goods and electronics.

Bhutan will get the duty benefit on 34 products such as fruits. The agreement will come into effect immediately.

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi and his Bhutanese counterpart will ink the deal.

STORY ON B1

## ROHINGYAS IN BHASAN CHAR

### Elated, eager to get to work

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA from Bhasan Char

Abdul Hamid wants to stay on Bhasan Char until he gets to return to Myanmar.

"I had the best sleep in three years. It's quiet and peaceful here," he said yesterday morning with a broad smile.

"We have buildings, we have electricity, and we don't have to carry water from far. This is a wide open space," he said.

Hamid is one of the 1,642 Rohingyas who arrived on Bhasan Char Friday afternoon.

This correspondent talked to at least 40 Rohingyas yesterday morning and all of them expressed satisfaction after spending the first night on the island.

But a majority of them said they needed work to be able to live a better life. They said that they were happy to have moved to plain land from the hilly terrain in Cox's Bazar.

A few said it would have been better if there were bathrooms attached to each room while some others said they would prefer larger rooms.

Forty-year-old Lalu Begum said the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar were hell, compared to Bhasan Char.

"It feels safe and it's not chaotic like the camps. Water is easily available, it is easier to walk on plain land, and we don't have to struggle for everything," she said.

Saiful Islam Chowdhury, coordinator NGO Alliance for Bhasan Char, said, "Cooked food were distributed among the Rohingyas after they arrived. Rice and egg curry were

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RELATED STORY ON PAGE 12

## Bangabandhu's sculpture found defaced

Impatience won't be wise, PM on it, says Quader; some scholars want Mujib Minar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kustia

Vandals damaged an under-construction sculpture of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Kustia town early yesterday.

The incident happens at a time when the ruling Awami League and several Islamist parties are at loggerheads over sculptures.

Kustia municipal authorities are constructing the sculpture at Panch Rasta More in Thanapara area.

Robiul Islam, executive engineer of Kustia municipality, said workers found the sculpture damaged when they

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Children playing at the doorstep of their new home at Cluster-8 living quarters on Bhasan Char island. The open space is in stark contrast to the living conditions in congested Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar.

PHOTO: MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

## DEMOCRACY DAY TODAY

### Still not there

On December 6, 1990, military dictator Ershad stepped down in the face of a mass uprising and handed power over to a caretaker government ending his nine years of autocratic rule. The nation then embarked on a new journey with fresh promises. Thirty years later, on the eve of the occasion, what is celebrated every year as Democracy Day, The Daily Star talked to three student leaders of the movement about what they dreamt of and what actually has been achieved.



ASHIM KUMAR UKIL

It's true that people's aspiration regarding the restoration of democracy through the fall of autocratic ruler HM Ershad in December, 1990, was not fulfilled completely, said Ashim Kumar Ukil, a ruling Awami League MP and the then general secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League.

"We are moving forward ... we have formulated an education policy, our

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AMANULLAH AMAN

Amanullah Aman, former Ducus VP and one of the popular leaders in the anti-Ershad movement in 1990, said, "Sacrifices of many people in the mass uprising against the autocratic ruler went in vain as we see today that democracy is confined."

"... democracy, human rights, and people's basic rights are absent in the country," Aman, also

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RUHIN HOSSAIN PRINCE

Former president of Bangladesh Chhatra Union and also a student leader during the anti-Ershad movement in 1990 alleged that the present government has undermined the spirit of the mass uprising against the Ershad regime.

"We had carried out nine long years of movement against the autocratic ruler HM Ershad to establish people's basic rights,

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