

Britain rolls out Oxford

FROM PAGE 1
that has threatened to overwhelm the public health system and prompted the government to warn tougher curbs can be expected.

The vaccine, developed by AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford, is seen as advantageous by many experts because it does not require very cold temperatures for storage like the ones from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna.

That could mean greater access to the vaccine for less wealthy parts of the world in the fight against the coronavirus, which has infected more than 85 million people with more than 1.84 million known deaths.

"I'm very pleased that I got the Oxford vaccine," said Brian Pinker, an 82-year-old retired maintenance manager who Britain's NHS said was the first to receive the AstraZeneca jab.

"The vaccine means everything to me. To my mind it's the only way of getting back to a bit of normal life," Pinker said at Oxford's Churchill Hospital.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock told the BBC that Britain's fight against a resurgent virus has been "significantly accelerated" with the introduction of the AstraZeneca vaccine. The virus has claimed 75,000 lives in Britain.

Britain has already vaccinated around one million people after approving the Pfizer vaccine in early December and hopes to give shots to tens of millions in the next three months, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said in a BBC interview.

Vaccinations were also under way in European countries like France, Germany and Greece.

But the French government yesterday faced growing pressure to accelerate its vaccination drive, with President Emmanuel Macron reportedly also furious over the slow pace of progress.

Just a few hundred people have received the jab so far in France, compared with over 200,000 in Germany and around one million in Britain.

In Beijing, thousands lined up to receive shots as Chinese authorities raced to inoculate millions ahead of the Lunar New Year mass travel season in February.

Beijing has already administered around 4.5 million doses of largely unproven emergency vaccines this year -- mostly to health workers and other state employees destined for overseas jobs, according to authorities.

South Korea is reviewing AstraZeneca's request for approval of its vaccine, as it expands a ban on private gatherings of more than four people to the whole country with daily cases topping more than 1,000 in four days.

South Korea's drug safety ministry

said it will aim to approve the British shot for emergency use in 40 days. The approval would mark the first for the country, which has been grappling with a prolonged surge in infections during the latest wave that has led to a sharp increase in deaths.

Vietnam has agreed to buy 30 million doses of the Covid-19 vaccine produced by AstraZeneca Plc, the government said yesterday, adding that authorities are also seeking to purchase vaccines from other sources, including Pfizer Inc, reports Reuters.

The Southeast Asian country has previously agreed to get a Russian vaccine though also said it would not rush to secure vaccine deals, citing the potential for high financial costs and after managing to contain its coronavirus outbreaks to only 1,494 cases, with 35 deaths.

STUMBLING US ROLLOUT
Elsewhere, American officials on Sunday rejected claims by outgoing President Donald Trump that the country's death toll of more than 350,000 was exaggerated, as they defended the stumbling rollout of vaccines in the world's worst-hit nation.

The United States has a known caseload of more than 20 million, and the Trump administration has faced intense criticism for its handling of the pandemic, which has hammered the US economy.

It has started giving people the Pfizer and Moderna shots, but the 4.2 million people vaccinated so far are far below the official predictions of 20 million by the new year.

More than 13 million vaccine doses have been distributed nationwide, but efforts to inoculate health workers and vulnerable people have been hampered by logistical problems and overstretched hospitals and clinics, reports AFP.

"There have been a couple of glitches, that's understandable," top US expert Anthony Fauci said, adding it was a challenge "trying to get a massive vaccine program started and getting off on the right foot."

Troubling reports have emerged of vaccines going bad due to poor organisation, lack of healthcare professionals to administer them or, in one isolated case, sabotage.

Moncef Slaoui, chief advisor to the US government's military-led vaccine effort, said another alternative was being explored for the Moderna vaccine: administering half doses twice.

"We know it induces identical immune response," Slaoui said, adding that officials are in discussions with Moderna and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) about the proposal.



88 year old Trevor Cowlett receives the Oxford University/AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine from nurse Sam Foster at the Churchill Hospital in Oxford, southwest England yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Parents get to bury Lakingme after 25 days

FROM PAGE 12
underage girl, said Azim. "We scrutinised her birth certificate, medical report and other documents and found that she was an underage girl."

Sixth grader Lakingme was allegedly abducted from her home in Shilkhali Chakma para of Teknaf on January 5 last year. According to her birth certificate, she was 14 years and 10 months old on that day.

Her father Lala Aung Chakma said they went to Teknaf Police Station to file a case, but then OC Pradeep Kumar Das, accused of killing Maj (ret'd) Sinha, refused to record it. Lala filed a general diary as per the OC's suggestion, but police didn't take any action in this regard.

"I filed a case with Cox's Bazar Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal on January 17 last year," he said.

The accused abductors are: Yasin, 22, Md Isa 26, Abuiya and four-five unidentified people.

The Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) was tasked with the investigation of the case.

At least five witnesses in their statements to PBI said Lakingme was picked up from her house. This newspaper has obtained the copies of the statements.

The PBI, however, submitted the probe report to the tribunal on August 9 stating that the allegation of abduction was not found to be true. One of Lakingme's relatives saw her with her friend Nasima Aktar, and the latter's friend Riaz at a garden in Teknaf on January 5 last year. Lakingme then went to an unknown place for fear of possible consequences, added the report.

Police on December 10 called Lala Aung to visit Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue to identify his daughter's body. Accordingly, he went to the hospital and identified the body.

Law enforcers, however, did not hand him the body on that day saying

that the girl was married to one of her alleged abductors who managed a "birth certificate" that says she was 18.

Lala Aung alleged that his daughter was abducted, converted and later murdered. He demanded exemplary punishment of the abductors and killers.

Ataullah, who claimed to have married Lakingme, along with some others took her to the hospital around 1:30pm on December 10. Doctors at the hospital declared her dead around the same time, said Sub-Inspector Abdul Halim of Cox's Bazar Sadar Police Station.

Ataullah told police that his "wife" fell sick after taking poison at home. The tribunal on December 15 directed the Rab to investigate the case after the plaintiff filed a no-confidence petition over the report.

Yesterday, Lakingme's burial was completed at Ramu Jadimura Bouddha Mahasahan following Buddhist rituals, said her cousin Kyaw Ching Chakma.

Focus on lakes, not just drainage

FROM PAGE 12
He said the acceleration in the disappearance of water bodies, flood flow zones and canals after 2000 is the reason the city has been facing waterlogging problems since then.

Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) had been responsible for the 26 canals (84.5km) and the 10 box culverts since 1988. It also looks after 385 kilometres of storm-water drainage.

The Dhaka North City Corporation and Dhaka South City Corporation have been managing 2,200km of pipes and surface drains.

Responding to a question about Wasa's failure to ease the waterlogging problem in the capital, Taqsem said it was because seven organisations, including Wasa, city corporations and Bangladesh Water Development Board were responsible for solving the problem.

Now, as the responsibility has come under one entity, there will be better results as the city corporation mayors are also public representatives, he said.

When asked why Wasa failed to remove garbage from canals and box culverts where city corporations are now finding tonnes of garbage, Taqsem said their duty was to keep the canals fit to pass rainwater and the canals are still okay for that.

He said garbage is one of the main barriers to passing rainwater through canals and it is the duty of city corporations to manage solid waste. But when it is dropped in the canals or drains then it is Wasa's responsibility to clean the garbage, he added.

Wasa was given the charge of managing rainwater in 1988 by the Public Health Engineering Department mistakenly through an ordinance and since then the seven

organisations were performing the duty of managing rainwater, Taqsem said.

He said it was the duty of city corporations to do the job as other Wasas of the country like Chattogram Wasa, Khulna Wasa do not do the job as the respective city corporations perform that function, he said.

Wasa in 2012 formally requested the LGRD ministry to hand over charge of storm-water drains to city corporations and the LGRD ministry then formed several committees in this regard, he said.

But the process did not see the light of day at that time for different reasons, he added.

Taqsem said Wasa is giving all the technical support and technical know-how to the city corporations and also their manpower for two years to manage their new job.

N'ganj Mayor Ivy sues

FROM PAGE 12
The mayor filed the case against Khokon Saha with the Cyber Tribunal in Dhaka for making derogatory comments about her and circulating them on YouTube and Facebook, Shamim Al Mamun, bench assistant of the tribunal, told The Daily Star.

Prodip Das, who runs YouTube channel Hindu Lives Matter, was also accused in the case.

After a hearing, judge Mohammad Ash Sams Joglul Hossain took the case into cognisance and recorded the complainant's statements.

The court also instructed the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police to investigate the case

and submit a report to it by February 8.

According to case documents, Hindu Lives Matter circulated two videos on November 23 and December 1 last year where Khokon Saha made derogatory comments about Mayor Selina Hayat Ivy. The videos were also circulated on Facebook.

The accused circulated fabricated and derogatory comments about her which tarnished her image nationally and internationally, the complainant also said in the case statement.

On December 21, the complainant had gone to Narayanganj Sadar Police Station to file a case, but police advised her to file it with the Cyber Tribunal in Dhaka, the case statement added.

Adhere to the ideologies

FROM PAGE 12
THIS at the 73rd founding anniversary of BCL virtually from her official residence Gono Bhaban. The programme was arranged at Krishibid Institute, Bangladesh.

She said, "You have to lead the country from the frontlines, you have to build yourselves up that way."

In this connection, she reminded the BCL activists that one will be successful if that person could be groomed with ideology.

If their focus is on gaining material wealth, they cannot be successful in life, she said.

"Chhatra League is one of the oldest organisations in the subcontinent... Make it stronger," she said.

"We give highest priority to education because without an educated nation we won't achieve advancement. We'll attain peace through education. Bangladesh will be a non-communal, hunger and poverty-free developed

country..." she said.

About Covid-19, she directed all to follow the health guidelines to protect themselves from the virus.

She said the government is doing whatever is needed to keep country's economy running during the pandemic.

She said that apart from agriculture, the government is attaching same importance to industrialisation as both are essential for the country.

"There might be famine across the globe due to the coronavirus. To avert famine in Bangladesh, it should be ensured that not a single inch of arable land is left uncultivated," she said.

Former BCL leader and Awami League central committee member Dr Mostofa Jalal Mohiuddin, AL presidium member and former BCL leader Jahangir Kabir Nanak, BCL president Al Nahean Khan Joy also spoke at the programme while general secretary Lekhak Bhattacharjee conducted it.

Those who maligned

FROM PAGE 12
League seems certain to win the first national election."

PALTAN MEETING'S CALL: ESTABLISH MUJIBBAD

Speakers at a big public meeting at the Paltan Maidan today reaffirm their pledge to wipe out those elements who are maligning the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The meeting, organised by Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), urges the government to take effective measures against anti-people forces and foreign agents who are intent on undoing the hard-earned independence.

The meeting asks those who are responsible for initiating the slander campaign against Bangabandhu to apologise for their activities. Otherwise, the speakers warn, people would give a befitting reply.

The meeting expresses its firm determination to establish Mujibbad in the country and uphold the ideals

of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

2 LAKH TONNES OF US WHEAT COMMITTED

The United States has made a fresh commitment to supply two lakh metric tonnes of wheat for Bangladesh during the next three months. The US earlier provided 750,000 tonnes of wheat to Bangladesh valued at nearly 60 million dollars. The new US offer brings the total quantity of wheat provided to Bangladesh to 950,000 tonnes.

7 BRITISH-MADE RAILWAY ENGINES HANDED OVER

Seven English electric shunting locomotives are handed over to Mansur Ali, minister for communications, today by A Golds, high commissioner for the UK in Bangladesh, at a simple ceremony held at a railway diesel shop today. A total of 26 such engines will be supplied by the British government to Bangladesh as a grant.

Source: January 6, 1973 issues of *Dainik Bangla*, *The Bangladesh Observer* and *Ittefaq*.

Algerian jailed for 3 yrs for political protest memes

AFP, Algiers

An Algerian supporter of the Hirak protest movement was sentenced to three years in jail yesterday for satirical social media posts mocking the government and religion, a campaign group said.

Walid Kechida, 25, was accused of insulting President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and "offending the precepts" of Islam in internet memes and other online posts, said Kaci

Tansaout, from the CNLD prisoners' rights group.

"Walid Kechida is sadly sentenced to three years in prison with a fine," Tansaout said, adding that lawyers would appeal.

Lawyer Moumen Chadi confirmed the sentence.

The public prosecutor in Algeria's northeastern Setif province had called for a five-year sentence, and Kechida has already spent eight months in

detention awaiting trial.

Algerian authorities have arrested and prosecuted several activists in a bid to stem the Hirak protesters.

The CNLD says over 90 people, including activists, social media users and journalists, are currently in custody in connection with the country's anti-government protest movement or individual liberties -- mostly for dissenting social media posts.

SC stays HC verdict

FROM PAGE 12
headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain passed, the order on Sunday after granting a leave to appeal petition filed by the principal of Green Dale International School challenging the HC verdict.

The leave to appeal petition has now become a regular appeal against the HC verdict and the Appellate Division later delivers a final verdict on the appeal through a hearing, the DAG added.

Green Dale International School principal's lawyer M Asaduzzaman could not be reached over phone for his comments on the issue.

Following two separate writ petitions filed by two guardians in 2012 and 2014, challenging the legality of the fees, the HC on May 25, 2017 declared the annual readmission and session fees charged by English medium schools illegal.

The HC also issued a set of directives for running the educational institutions in a smooth and transparent manner. It said a managing committee

must be formed in every English medium school as per the Private (English medium) School and College Ordinance 1962 and the Private English Medium School Registration Rules 2007.

The committee must have representatives from the guardians, the teachers and the school authorities. It would have to hold meetings on a regular basis and appoint teachers and staff members through newspaper advertisements.

The committee would determine the admission and tuition fee along with the salaries and other benefits of the teachers and other employees. The owners would not be allowed to interfere in school activities, said the court.

The committee would audit the accounts of the schools and make the audit reports available to all parents and on the websites of the institutions.

In the judgment, the court also said the managing committee would work to ensure that a child spends less than the current four years to get promoted to grade-1 from playgroup.

US aircraft carrier to stay in Gulf: Pentagon

AFP, Washington

The US reversed a decision to bring an aircraft carrier home from the Gulf Sunday, with the Pentagon saying that due to "recent threats" by Iran the USS Nimitz would stay in position.

The Nimitz has been patrolling Gulf waters since late November, but in a statement issued on December 31, acting US defense secretary Christopher C. Miller ordered the vessel to "transit directly home to complete a nearly 10-month deployment."

The New York Times, quoting US officials, said this move was part of a "de-escalatory" signal to Tehran to avoid a conflict in President Donald Trump's last days in office.

However, Miller issued a new statement changing course on Sunday. "Due to the recent threats issued by Iranian leaders against President Trump and other U.S. government officials, I have ordered the USS Nimitz to halt its routine redeployment," he said.

"The USS Nimitz will now remain on station in the U.S. Central Command area of operations. No one should doubt the resolve of the United States of America."

He did not elaborate on the threats involved.

His statement came one year after a US drone strike in Baghdad killed Iran's revered commander Qasem Soleimani and his Iraqi lieutenant Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

Thousands of Iraqi mourners chanted "revenge" and "no to America" on Sunday.

The anniversary of the Baghdad drone strike was also marked in recent days across Iran and by supporters in Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and elsewhere.

Trump unilaterally withdrew the US from a landmark nuclear deal with Iran and other powers in 2018 and launched a "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran, reimposing and reinforcing crippling sanctions.

The two countries have twice come to the brink of war since June 2019, especially following the killing of Soleimani.

Days after the Soleimani assassination, Iran launched a volley of missiles at Iraqi bases housing US and other coalition troops, with Trump refraining from any further military response.

Chinese billionaire

FROM PAGE 12
fintech arm.

The Financial Times reported on Friday that Ma was replaced as a judge in the final episode in November of a game show for entrepreneurs called Africa's Business Heroes.

An Alibaba spokeswoman told Reuters yesterday that the change was due to a scheduling conflict, declining further comment.

While news coverage of Ma's absence from public view triggered speculation on Twitter, which is blocked in China, it was not a significant trending topic on social media in mainland China, where sensitive topics are subject to censorship.

Chinese regulators have zeroed in on Ma's businesses since his October speech including launching an antitrust probe into Alibaba and ordering Ant to separate its lending business from its online payments division.

"I think he's been told to lay low," said Duncan Clark, chairman of Beijing-based tech consultancy BDA China. "This is a pretty unique situation, more linked to the sheer scale of Ant and the sensitivities over financial regulation," he said.

Alibaba's Hong Kong-listed shares fell 2.15% yesterday.



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e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are invited through e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Project Director, Development of Different Infrastructures Under Dhaka South City Corporation for the procurement of following package, which will be available at e-GP website (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) from date 31/12/2020 time 22.00.

| Sl No. | Tender ID, Ref No. & Package No. | Name of works | Last selling date and time | Tender closing date & time |
|--------|---|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 01. | Tender ID- 531268 Ref: 46.207.007.09.04.2020-21 Package No. WD_P_116_DDIP | Different additional works for three Nos. six-storied Residential Building No. 8, 9, 10 at Ganaktuli Sweeper Colony in Ward No. 22. | 31/01/2021 12.00 | 31/01/2021 16.30 |
| 02. | Tender ID- 531044 Ref: 46.207.007.09.03.2020-21 Package No. WD_P_117_DDIP | Different additional works for three Nos. six-storied Residential Building No. 11, 12, 13 at Ganaktuli Sweeper Colony in Ward No. 22. | 31/01/2021 12.00 | 31/01/2021 16.30 |

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

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