













14cr to get Covid

government earmarked around Tk 4,236 crore to procure, preserve, and distribute the vaccine. Another Tk 1,006 crore was

allocated to buy healthcare equipment, according to the project documents. The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnec)

approved the project yesterday at its meeting held at the NEC Conference

Room in the capital. Prime Minister

Sheikh Hasina chaired the meeting

in the country's efforts to contain the

coronavirus outbreak, which has so far

The approval came a day after

coronavirus

the government okayed the Oxford

vaccine for emergency use. The

government also made an advanced

payment of Tk 509.7 crore yesterday for

the three crore doses of the vaccine to

be manufactured by Serum Institute of

documents do not mention the vaccine

The pandemic preparedness project

Planning Minister MA Mannan

yesterday told reporters that the

vaccine for coronavirus and healthcare

equipment would be bought under the

in June, the issue of vaccine import was

not included. The vaccine import issue

has been newly included in the project

plan. So the cost of the project has

The minister said, "The government

has taken the highest preparation in

importing vaccines. The prime minister

has also put the highest priority on it.

The prime minister said 'vaccine will be

available as per the contract. We believe

we will get vaccines.' The vaccines will be

The country has so far signed

ngreements to procure 9.8 crore doses of

vaccine -- 6.8 crore from COVAX and 3

crore from SII. These would inoculate 4.9

crore people of the country, considering

The aim of the project is to tackle the

pandemic through detecting Covid-19,

contact tracing, and strengthening

healthcare systems and emergency operation centres; and increasing storage

Around 80 percent of the 170 million

population will be vaccinated in two

of the emergency medical equipment.

increased."

distributed fairly.

two doses per person.

THE PROJECT

"When this project was approved first

Yesterday's approval is a crucial step

virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

infected at least 5,17,920 people.

University-AstraZeneca

'MURDERED GIRL' FOUND ALIVE

Cops tortured 3 for fake confessions

Judicial probe finds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A judicial probe committee yesterday submitted its report to the High Court saying officials of Narayanganj Sadar Police Station tortured and forced three people to give confessional statements to magistrates about raping and killing a minor girl who later turned out to be alive after 49 days last year.

Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) of Narayanganj Farhana Ferdousi submitted the probe report to the HC through its registrar's office during hearing on a revision petition filed in connection with the issue in line with its November 19, 2020 directive.

CJM Farhana Ferdousi in the report cited the statements of the three accused -- Abdullah, Khalil and Rakib -- who said that the then officer-incharge of Narayananj Sadar Police Station Mostafizur Rahman and its Sub-inspector Shamim Al Mamun and Abdul Hye have tortured and forced them in different ways to give confessional statements.

In the conclusion of the probe report, Farhana Ferdousi, said SI Shamim Al Mamun tortured the accused after arresting them in connection with the incident.

At the same time, the judicial committee said in its inquiry report that two judicial magistrates -- Aftabuzzamam and Humayun

Kabir -- have properly recorded the confessional statements from the three accused as they made the statements spontaneously.

Petitioners' lawyer Mohammad Shishir Manir, who read out the judicial probe report before the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman, said that the contents of the probe report are seriously contradictory.

The facts behind the incident would remain unearthed if the victim child could not be found alive, he said.

The lawyer also prayed to the HC to issue some directives about interrogation of the accused and recording their confessional statements.

The HC bench then said that the accused persons might have been sentenced to death following their "confessional statements" if the victimised girl would not be found

The bench asked Attorney General AM Amin Uddin to place arguments on this issue and fixed January 13 for further hearing and passing order on

According to the statement of revision petition, the Class five student went missing on July 4 last year.

Her father Jahangir Hossain filed a case with Narayanganj Sadar Model Police Station on August 6 last year on charge of abducting his daughter.

Vietnam jails three critics ahead of major party congress

Police ask Interpol to locate

Vietnam yesterday jailed three prodemocracy bloggers on anti-state charges, one of their lawyers said, weeks ahead of the communist government's party congress.

The run-up to a leadership transition later this month is a particularly tense period for the state as candidates jostle for power behind

In recent months, the authoritarian regime has stepped up its crackdown on dissent and has arrested numerous

At a quick trial in Ho Chi Minh City, three critics of the state who belong to the outlawed Independent Journalists Association of Vietnam (IJAV) were

Islam, assistant inspector general (NCB)

of Police Headquarters, told The Daily

on Monday with all details of the former

managing director of NRB Global Bank,

also known as PK Halder. The letter

will be placed before a commission of

The commission will analyse the

"It may take sometime, but we are

The four NBFIs are: International

The Anti-Corruption Commission

expecting the notice will be issued

Leasing and Financial Services Limited,

People's Leasing, FAS Finance and

on January 8 last year filed a case

against PK Halder on charges of illegally

In another development, the High

Court yesterday issued a travel ban

against 25 accomplices of PK Halder,

including his mother Lilaboti Halder, so

that the ACC can question them about

While hearing a suo moto rule, the

It also asked the ACC to question

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul

Islam Talukder and Justice Ahmed

Sohel came up with the order after

five depositors of People's Leasing and

Financial Service (PLFS), a non-banking

financial institution, submitted the names

of 25 accomplices of PK Halder before

the court and said they abetted Halder

embezzling and laundering a huge

The 24 other accomplices are: SK

Sur, Harunur Rashid, Uzzal Kumar

Nandi, Shami Huda, Amitavh Adhikary,

Abontika Boral, Shamima, Runai,

NI Khan, Sukumar Mridha, Anindita

Mridha, Tapan Dev, Swapan Kumar

Mistri, Avijit Chowdhury, Rajib Shom,

Erfan Uddin Ahmed, Angan Mohan

Roy, Nongo Chow Mong, Nizamul

Ahsan, Manik Lal Somaddar, Sohel

Shams, Mahbub Musa, AQ Siddique

Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin

The five depositors are: Nashid

Kamal, a former Dhaka University

teacher and daughter of former chief

and Moazzem Hossain.

Uddin Manik confirmed it.

amount of money from PLFS abroad.

them in accordance with the law if it

court ordered the authorities concerned

of the government to restrain them from

leaving the country till further order.

money laundering allegations.

feels necessary.

amassing wealth worth Tk 275 crore.

Investment and Reliance Finance.

details in the files that the NCB sent and

then a red notice will be issued publicly,

independent lawyers, he said.

said the NCB official.

soon," he added.

He said they sent a letter to Interpol

sentenced to jail for "making and disseminating information against"

High-profile writer Pham Chi Dung, 54, founding member and president of IJAV, was jailed for 15 years, while military veteran Nguyen Tuong Thuy, 69, was sentenced to 11

A younger member of the group, Le Huu Minh Tuan, was also handed an 11-vear term.

The trio are well-known for calling for greater democracy in Vietnam.

Lawyer Nguyen Van Mieng told AFP they admitted writing articles "to support freedom of speech and other democratic rights", but denied spreading information against the communist regime.

justice Mustafa Kamal; Samia Binte

Mahbub, a housewife; Tariqul Islam,

an official of Khaled Mansur Trust,

a welfare organisation; Showkatur

Rahman, a freedom fighter and former

director of DU gymnasium, and Raziul

They also submitted separate

They said they are not getting their

statements before the HC bench,

deposited money back from PLFS

after PK Halder and his accomplices

embezzled huge sums from the

ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan

and DAG Amin Uddin Manik also

submitted two separate reports to

the HC, saying that the ACC and

the government have sent relevant

documents to Interpol to issue a red

The HC bench fixed January 20 for

In another development, the ACC

notice on PK Halder and to arrest him.

further hearing and passing an order on

yesterday issued notices to seven

persons to appear before it next week

to face questioning over embezzlement

of over Tk 3,500 crore from Peoples'

Director Gulshan Anowar Prodhan

asked former chairman of Peoples'

Leasing Motiur Rahman and its former

director Arefin Shamsul Alamin to

appear on January 11, proprietors of

Nature Enterprise Nawsher Ul Islam,

Momtaz Begum and Papia Banarjee

on January 12 and 13, and proprietors

of MTB Marine Ltd Sanjeeb Kumar

Hawlader and Basudev Banarjee on

reports, PK Halder is now staying in

Toronto. He is director of P&L Hal

Holding Inc, a Canadian corporation.

According to Canadian media

Following a petition filed by two

depositors, the HC on January 21 last

year directed the Bangladesh Bank

and all private banks to freeze the

accounts of PK Halder, his five relatives,

Bank Asia's former managing director

Erfanudidn Ahmed and PK Halder's

aide Uzzal Kumar Nondi for allegedly

The court also ordered the seizure

of passports of 20 people, including

PK Halder, his wife Susmita Saha and

his brother Pritish Kumar Halder and

any of their movable and immovable

properties, including stocks, cash and

cars, to any persons or entities until the

halted the transfer of ownership of

misappropriating funds.

disposal of the case.

In separate letters, ACC Deputy

organisation and laundered it abroad.

Hasan, a retired ambassador.

describing their plights.



The authorities of Bangladesh Railway (Eastern zone) evict illegal establishments, mostly shops and markets, in Akhaura Bypass area beside Dhaka-Agartala highway in Brahmanbaria yesterday. PHOTO: MASHUK HRIDOY

Govt's cost not over \$5 a shot

largest vaccine manufacturer in the world, charges Bangladesh more than India for the vaccine.

"It is an international agreement. Any deviation from the agreement will be a violation of it. We believe Serum Institute will not do that," he said.

Referring to the deal, Papon pointed out that if Serum charges India less than \$4 per shot, it will also be applicable to Bangladesh. In that case, Bangladesh will be at liberty to buy more shots from Serum with the surplus money or get a refund.

On the other hand, if Serum charges India more than \$4 for a vaccine shot, it would not be applicable to Bangladesh.

Health Secretary Abdul Mannan echoed Papon.

"As per the agreement, we will not pay more than the Indian government pays for the vaccine," Mannan told The Daily Star.

mentioned that the He also government yesterday made an advance payment to Serum for the vaccine.

Asked, Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services, said the government paid Serum Tk 509.70 crore (around \$59 million) in advance for the vaccine shots.

As per the agreement, three crore doses will arrive in Bangladesh in six instalments -- 50 lakh shots a month. The first shipment is expected to arrive in mid-February.

In a tweet yesterday, Poonawalla vaccine to Bangladesh in a large clarified that export of vaccines to all countries is permitted.

"I would like to clarify two matters; as there is confusion in the public domain, exports of vaccines are permitted to all countries and a joint public statement clearing up any recent miscommunication with regard to Bharat Biotech will be made," he wrote.

Later in a joint statement, Serum and Bharat Biotech pledged "a smooth rollout of Covid-19 vaccines to India and the world".

The two firms said the more important task in front of them is saving lives and livelihoods of populations in India and the world.

"Vaccines are a global public health good and they have the power to save lives and accelerate the return to economic normalcy at the earliest," the statement read.

BRIEFING

Beximco Pharmaceuticals Limited started negotiating with Serum for getting the much-sought-after Oxford vaccine four to five months ago, according to Papon. "We found that only 10 crore shots

were up for grab at Serum's plant," he said at a press briefing in the capital on "As a private company, we booked 5-10 lakh doses for \$8 per shot. Serum

offered us to be its local agent in Bangladesh and we accepted it."

firm whether it could provide the temperature-sensitive, he added.

"Initially, we demanded 10 crore

doses. Later, we were able to convince Serum to provide three crore doses."

He further said that when the issue of pricing of the vaccine came up, they told Serum to directly negotiate with the Bangladesh government.

The Indian firm asked the Bangladesh government to take "the research risk", which the government refused, mentioned Papon.

Serum also said it would keep seven crore doses for the Indian government. "We then asked them [Serum] what price the Indian government would pay for it. They said they asked for \$5 per dose and the Indian government was willing to pay \$3," he said.

"Bangladesh finally agreed to set the price at \$4 per dose on condition that if the Indian government pays more for the vaccine shots, Serum won't be able to charge us more. But if India purchases the vaccine at a lower price, Serum will also reduce the price accordingly for us."

About Beximco's commission, Papon said the firm will provide the vaccine to the government for \$5 per dose, which includes standard charges of 80 cents and also service charge of 20 cents for transporting the shots to vaccination centres through its coldchain mechanism.

Vaccine is not like other medicines He said they later asked the Indian such as capsules or syrup. It is

Teams of six would be engaged in running the vaccine programme.

Each team will consist of two vaccinators (from among nurses, paramedics, interns and hired medical staffers) and four volunteers for screening, mobilisation, and record keeping. The budget includes Tk 1,175 crore

phases as per the plan.

for COVAX vaccines purchased at subsidized prices; Tk 2,262 crore for direct purchase from COVAX or other sources; Tk 68 crore as shipping cost; Tk 384 crore for vaccine transport and operational expenses; and Tk 346 crore for vaccine preservation, cold chain, and

Apart from procuring, preserving, and distributing the vaccines, the other major project operations include installing modern microbiology laboratories alongside PCR machines at 27 medical colleges and hospitals in the country.

Besides, RT-PCR, antigen, and health safety kits will also be procured under the project. Biosafety Level-3 labs will also be set up at IEDCR and Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (BITID), Chattogram.

Under the project, 10-bed intensive care units (ICU) and 20-bed isolation units would be set up in 43 district hospitals.

The other major parts of the project include setting up of 10-bed ICU units at 10 medical college and hospitals and five-bed ICU units at infectious disease hospitals in Dhaka and Chattogram, setting up of seven medical screening units at five ports of entry, setting up of infectious disease units at 27 medical college and hospitals, setting up of infection prevention and control units at 62 district hospitals, setting up of medical waste management plants at 10 medical college hospitals and 10 district hospitals, and installing central liquid medical oxygen system at 30 government hospitals.

He gets bail in 2 cases based on police report He was speaking to journalists at a Erfan was arrested after a case was filed

sentenced to one vear's imprisonment by a mobile court for illegally possessing walkie-talkies and foreign liquor in October last year.

The judge passed the order on condition that Erfan will appear before the court every week in connection with the cases, Pran Nath, a defence lawyer, told The Daily Star.

However, Erfan -- a suspended councillor of ward-30 of Dhaka South City Corporation -- cannot walk out of jail now as three more cases against him are pending.

On October 26 last year, Rab Executive Magistrate Sarwoer Alam handed six months' imprisonment to Erfan for keeping the radio transceivers illegally and the other six months for the illegal liquor possession.

On Monday, Chawkbazar police handed their final investigation report stating that Erfan was being framed with planted evidence to ruin his political career and social standing, and the parliamentarian's son received bail yesterday following the submission of

However, the Rab DG said, "We conducted the drive... We filed the cases based on what we found during programme marking Bangabandhu's birth centenary headquarters.

"Police have filed the investigation report according to their understanding. Now it is a sub-judice matter. We don't really want to speak much about a subjudice matter," he added.

Later, Lt Col Ashique Billah, Rab's legal and media wing director, told reporters that Rab carried out the drive based on specific information and seized items including firearms and alcohol in the presence of an executive

A Rab official gathered information and evidence and filed cases with Chawkbazar Police Station under the Narcotics Control Act and Arms Act in this regard, he said.

"We are not aware what the investigation officer did later on. We think the investigation officer submitted the final report according to

their understanding," he said. Asked whether Rab, the complainant of the cases, will file any no-confidence petition, Ashique Billah said they were not aware of what the investigation officer mentioned in the final report.

"After receiving the copy of the final report, we will take a decision," he said.

against him on charge of "attacking" Lt Wasif Ahmed Khan of Bangladesh Navy in the capital's Dhanmondi area on October 25 last year. Rab conducted a drive at Haii

Salim's house on Debidash Lane in Old Dhaka the next day. After the raid on October 26,

Rab officials said they recovered two unlicensed firearms raiding the fourth and fifth floors of Erfan's nine-storey building -- Chan Sarder Dada Bari -on Debidasghat Lane in Chawkbazar. They also recovered 38 walkie-talkies, five virtual private servers (VPS), and a briefcase which contained handcuffs.

They said the walkie-talkies they seized are usually used by members of different government agencies. Besides, the VPS, repeater and router seized during the raid, can be used to communicate within a radius of 10km.

Talking to reporters then, Rab officials said they suspected that using the firearms and security equipment, Erfan's men used to pick up the councillor's opponents after introducing themselves as law enforcers

Rab also seized 12 cans of beer and seven bottles of foreign liquor from Erfan's room, Rab officials added.

A deadline that would never end

over the meeting virtually, directed the authorities concerned to investigate the delay and cost hike and take departmental action against those responsible, meeting sources said. The DGHS sought extension of the

more than the original one. After the meeting, Planning Minister Abdul Mannan told reporters that the project was supposed to be completed in 2014 and the deadline was extended

project deadline till June 2023 and a rise

in project cost, which is 147.76 percent

to December 2019 in several phases. Now, the DGHS sought another extension till 2023, meaning it would take 11 years to implement one project, he said, adding, "The prime minister has expressed serious discontent and annoyance over the matter. This is not acceptable.'

Although the project authorities tried to give reasons for the delay, the PM did not want to hear any excuses.

"She [the PM] asked me to conduct investigation through IMED [Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division] immediately. She also asked to involve other agencies concerned, and, if necessary, to investigate every nook and cranny [of He said they will form a committee

today and submit report before the prime minister soon MISMANAGEMENT FROM THE In 2012, the government took up the

project to establish an institution for medical education and provide modern medical facilities to the people of Kushtia and adjacent areas. But no feasibility test was carried out

before the project was approved. Even a land was not selected till then, according to an in-depth report of IMED released in June last year. The deadline of the project was extended till 2016 in two phases,

without escalating the project cost. But when the project went through the first revision in 2018, the cost rose to TK 611.08 crore and the deadline was set to December 2019. The project saw 34 percent physical

progress till 2019 and the second revision proposal remained pending for one year, creating obstacles in implementation.

was construction of the buildings incomplete, the bidding process of some buildings was not done.

Mismanagement was found from the outset," read the report, adding that all infrastructures are being implemented under 71 packages, where only one building is being constructed under four packages. "As a result, time and money were

wasted," it said, adding that as the project work was divided into small packages, major contractors did not show much interest. The project authorities called tender following the rate schedule of 2011,

instead of the rate schedule of 2008 as mentioned in the Development Project Proposal, which created further complexities, read the report. As the medical college has been admitting 50 students every year since

2012, its academic activities have been ongoing in other buildings and without any medical equipment. No equipment for the hospital or

While approving the first revision of the project on June 21, 2018, the Ecnec directed the authorities concerned to take action against those responsible for irregularities by changing "the scope of work" mentioned in the DPP and

by violating the financial and planning discipline.

"Ĥowever, no action was taken yet in

this regard," read the report. Citing the IMED's report, when a reporter asked what action was taken over the irregularities, Abul Kalam Azad, member (socio-economic infrastructure division) of the Planning Commission, said action, including termination of obs, was taken following the report and the project was recast.

"However, flaws in the project [implementation] still remain," he said. In its report, IMED mentioned 25 weak points, including unskilled contractors and their negligence.

It also mentioned that bamboo and wood was being used instead of steel in a building. On January 17, 2019, a portion of that building gave way, killing

one worker and injuring 10 others. Although the liable contractor was barred from participating in the bidding process of the Public Works Department for two years, the work for the project continued and no one was bound to pay compensation for the accident, read









According to the report, not only

medical education could be procured as constructions of the buildings could not be completed.

the report. Meanwhile, the Ecnec yesterday

approved six other projects at the total cost of Tk 9,569.23 crore.